



FUNDAMENTAL TRUTHS

KAUSAR NIAZI

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND THE BOOK

Maulana Kausar Niazi was born on April 21, 1934. At 40, he is among the youngest members of the Cabinet where, for the last three years, he has been Minister first for Information and Broadcasting, Auqaf and Haj, and now for Religious Affairs, Auqaf and Haj. He speaks several languages, including Arabic, Persian, Urdu and English. His knowledge of Islamic theology is as unique as his acquaintance with the best in world literature, not necessarily religious. The practical thinker that emerges from the book uplifts the Maulana to the plane of one truly learned in the ways of Islam, whose "Fundamental Truths" are as right today as they were fourteen hundred years ago. These, supported by

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FOREWORD

Fundamental Truths is a collection of lectures delivered by me at Friday prayers in Lahore many years ago. This series was planned with the special purpose of presenting the everlasting Truths of Islam in the context of modern day world; and in the light of modern disciplines of knowledge and research. To my mind widespread dissemination of education and development and growth of physical sciences, during the past two centuries or so, could have proved a greater blessing for mankind if they had not neglected the spiritual needs of man. Material welfare and spiritual enlightenment are not, and ought never to be, accepted as mutually exclusive. They are, if anything, complementary to each other. It is true, however, that except for Islam no other religion or philosophy of life presents such a pragmatic synthesis of life on earth and the life hereafter. This is particularly true of the West with its sanctified traditions of complete separation of the religious and the spiritual from the practical aspects of life. Modern education coming from the West carried the germs of scepticism, disbelief and doubt. Our younger generation fell easy prey to such misgivings simply by default. There was no guidance for it on

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spiritual matters expressed in coherent terms and relevant to the pressures and pulls of modern life. My choice of topics for these lectures, i.e. "Tauhid," "Risalat" and "Akhirat," bear testimony to my concern for providing such a guidance to the modern mind tormented by the stresses and strains of life.

These lectures were first presented in a book form in 1957. Another two editions under the title of *Unseen Realities* ("ان دیکھی حقیقتیں") were issued by Ferozsons in 1973. After revision of the original manuscript four additional editions were run under the title of *Fundamental Truths* ("بنیادی حقیقتیں").

My grateful thanks are due to Mr. Zahid Malik, Director General, Pakistan National Centre, without whose personal interest in production, this book would not have seen the light of the day. I am also greatly indebted to Mr. Zahurul Haq, Editor, Publications, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who devoted such a great deal of care and effort in translating these lectures from Urdu into English thereby making it possible for me to reach a wider circle of readers including foreigners, who were indifferent to the spiritual values of Islam, mainly through lack of knowledge.

Islamabad
Aug. 25, 1974

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Chapter I

TAUHID

UNITY OF GOD

*The focal point of the universe is nothing but God;
The acme of universal activity is nothing but God;
The Heavens move because of His power ;
To the Sun He has given perpetuity and light ;
The sea produces pearls by His refulgence ;
The wave leaps in the river by His magnetism.*

EVERY PROPHET PROCLAIMED TAUHID (UNITY OF GOD)

ALL the Prophets who preceded the last of the Prophets, Mohammad (Peace be upon him), primarily invited the people to: "Pray not to any but the real Master." This was the basic Message of every Prophet and God's Messenger. Joseph, when imprisoned, had preached thus to his co-inmates: "Comrades, can these numerous false gods be better than the simple omnipotent God?" Shuaib's and Hud's first call to their peoples was: "Pray not to any but God." Prophet Noah's exhortation had emphasised, "Have fear of Him alone; Him alone ye must obey and worship."

The common message preached by the Prophets was, therefore, the eternal Truth that lighted their spiritual flame and burnt itself into the human soul. In every Age the concept of God has found more votaries than deniers. Although humanity chose to forget a lot—nobility, modesty, the basic qualities, the concept of God and confidence in Him remained ineffaceable. True, every Age threw up its crop of disbelievers and heretics but the reason why the doctrine of God's Unity is eternal is because its

Truth, like the sun, may be clouded by falsehood but can never be obliterated. If a sick man dubbed a tasty dish as bitter because his own tongue tasted so, it would not be said the dish was bad, but that the man was sick. In exactly the same way, if, in any Age, spiritually sick people have denied the existence of God, their deficiency does nothing to alter the irrefutable veracity of TAUHID.

The doctrine of God's oneness is what human instinct itself testifies to and is best established by an event narrated in the Holy Quran. When God created Man, the first question He put to the species was, "Am I not your Creator?" And the species answered: "Verily Thou art. We bear witness" The Qur'an says this pledge was taken from the human species so that they may not later deny knowledge of Truth. In the answer the species gave is embodied the grand doctrine of God's oneness whose instinctive acknowledgment is a part of our creed. This was the doctrine which the Prophets as Reformers preached and over which we made a covenant with our Master at the dawn of creation. By ignoring it in our time we are only inviting destruction. We Muslims who had raised the clarion call "Within our hearts is the custody of the Unity of God" are, ourselves, deviating.

"Have we forgotten the faithful instinctive pledge?
Has the coveting world forgotten God?"

TAUHID NOT AGAINST REASON

WHEN we talk of TAUHID, the philosopher comes up with the question: How can one accept the existence of a Being whom religion invests with the quality of existing from the beginning to the end of Time? When the mind succumbs to perverted thinking it is ready to throw every doctrine overboard. To dispel such scepticism, Imam Rab-bani Mujaddad Alf-i-Sani has offered a pertinent explanation. Affirming that the doctrine of Unity is not against reason, he holds, it is BEYOND reason. The limited human intellect is unable to grasp the doctrine's profundity. An animal, if it were told, would not comprehend that Man can fly. But if it were to say (because it cannot understand such matters with its limited intelligence) that it was impossible for Man to fly, all one could say was that the animal was, after all, an animal. Take human inventions as a case in point. What was considered impossible two hundred years ago is now considered most natural. If people living two hundred years ago had been told that an atom had the power to destroy a town spread over a radius of 12 sq. miles, turn 10,000 people into vapour and

kill another 1,26,000 through chain reaction, what would they have thought?—That the whole thing was utter nonsense. But could their disbelief expunge all the horrors of an atomic destruction? Daily in our lives we see things we do not usually give a thought to. For instance, if we had not seen a tree and someone had told us that it grew out of a little seed sown in the soil and as it bursts out of its cradle and spreads itself thick and wide, it bears fruit, and its wood is used for lighting fires and it spreads to shelter people, would we have believed it? Would we not have said all this talk was so much trash? We probably would have, but for all our incredulity facts would have remained facts. It follows that to declare something one does not understand as unreasonable is shallow ignorance. That is why the world's greatest sage has asked us to regard TAUHID as higher than human intelligence.

Abu Huraira thus relates the Holy Prophet's words: "Satan comes to you and asks who created this and that? He even asks you as to who created your Creator? When his talks take this turn, seek God's protection and stop all converse with Satan." Abu Bakr has said: "Sanctified is the Being Who has revealed Himself to His creatures only through the method that He is beyond their power to comprehend."

Akbar Allahabadi, the poet, has said :
"Thou art by the Heart seen but not with eyes,
And this, I have realised, is the way to recognise
Thee."

INTELLECTUAL PROOF OF TAUHID

IF guidance were sought from one's intellect within the limitations set for it by the Creator, no complications would arise, and the doctrine of TAUHID would automatically appear as the voice of instinct. Man's circumscribed intellect notwithstanding, Ibn Abbas was led to the conclusion that the chain of creation must lead up to its Creator. He who has no predecessor and no successor is first and last God, and to try and discover the creator of the Creator was patently against reason. In fact, intellect comes into its own only when it becomes conscious of its limits and surrenders itself to the Almighty, Who is beyond its comprehension. Iqbal has well said :

“In the labyrinths of the Universe, intellect got lost;

It could reach its goal only through Tauhid ;

Otherwise how could the poor intellect reach its destination ;

Or the paper boat steer to the coast ?”

When intellect confines itself to its limits, it becomes conscious that every bit of the world testifies to the truth of TAUHID.

A pagan once asked Imam Shafi'i: "What is the argument for the existence of God?" Pointing to a tree the Imam replied: "Yonder mulberry tree." The pagan exclaimed with surprise, "How so?" and the Imam said: "Look at its leaves. How insignificant they look. But if one were to consider their uses one would be lost in wonder. When deer devour them the leaves transform into musk; when bees feed on them, they become honey; when the worm consumes them they turn into silk. These very leaves when eaten by goats become their refuse. Can the intellect imagine the insignificant leaves were capable of bearing such versatile qualities without the aid of their Creator?"

In this, his unique way Imam Shafi'i has explained the Doctrine. The more one contemplates the wonderful mysteries of the world, the greater is one's spontaneous humility to God. Those impressed by scientists should enquire of them what they think of these wonders. They will tell you that the Earth's light-givers, the moon and the sun, are respectively 2,40,000 and 9,93,00,000 miles away. There are stars whose light reaches us from beyond in four and a quarter years, although the speed of light is 1,86,000 miles per second. These are stars nearest to the sun and the moon. Science reveals others whose light takes millions of years to reach us and others whose light has not reached us to this day. The dazzling

expanse of nature is for ever a source of astonishment to Man who cannot but bend in obeisance before God and spontaneously murmur:

“Great is ALLAH, the Supreme Creator.”

ANOTHER ARGUMENT IN SUPPORT OF TAUHID

ONCE some atheists were captured for the purpose of killing them and brought before Imam Abu Hanifa who asked them: "If someone were to tell you he had seen a sailorless boat ply between coasts laden with goods, what would you think of him?" They replied that not one of them would believe the story. "What, then," the Imam asked, "has come over you, that you who cannot believe a boat can ply without sailors believe the great factory of creation runs by itself?" The weighty argument struck home and the unbelievers one and all embraced Islam.

Scepticism in modern times is the order of the day and Man commuting through space has flown farther away from self-evident reality. No one can visualise a house without an owner, a garden without a gardener and a watch without a watch-maker. Nothing can be created but by a creator. But scientists and scholars would have us believe otherwise with pettifogging dialectics designed to show the perpetual automation of the universe. Yet no one doubts them. How well has Maulana Rumi said :

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“The body moves because of the soul; though
thou seest not the soul,
Yet by the movements of the body,
Thou knowest of the existence of the soul.”

The small workshop of our body is operated by our soul, but the soul itself is invisible. We recognise it through the manifestations of life and of body movement:

“Reason to operate must be fortified with faith;
For anything to move there must be something
that caused the movement.”

Reason itself has no substantial form but is symbolically identifiable by distinguishing wisdom from folly. Maulana Rumi holds that God also is invisible and cannot be seen with the moral eye. But every phenomenon of nature unequivocally proclaims its Creator, His power, might and majesty.

ATTRIBUTES OF THE ONLY GOD

LOOKING into a time-piece one would notice it comprises a number of large and small parts which work in unison. One marvels at its delicate machinery and the maker's dexterity, appreciating that he must be extraordinarily talented. Casting a look at wondrous Nature one feels that the Being Who created the marvel could not be blind, deaf or mute, but the very epitome of perfection. About God's attributes, Imam Malik has pertinently said, "Countless millions have peopled the world since its creation but it is astonishing that no two faces are alike. The human face with its lips, cheeks, eyes and teeth is a small thing. But the ingenious Creator has given to every face its own traits. Such being His power and workmanship human intelligence can hardly fathom His countless attributes, unless He chooses Himself to reveal them."

Some religions and philosophies acknowledge a deity which they consider is not directly concerned with the running of the universe. To them this deity has either delegated its powers to its favourites or created smaller deities to look after the world. Against this irrefutable evidence that the tiniest

particle and the glowing sun bear witness to God's Unity. "Pierce the heart of a particle, and you will find in it the same blood that makes up the heart of the sun."

Undoubtedly, God Himself alone operates the world which is subject to His will and direction; otherwise how could one explain the co-ordination among the elements; sunrise and sunset; day and night; the miracles of wind and weather, lightning; the harvest and other sights which fill us with wonder and spiritual elation?

We cannot see God but we feel His mercy and providence and the manifestations of His power. His wisdom amazes us. We should not worship Him merely because we are overawed by, but because we believe in, His attributes as described in the Holy Quran. Such faith would add depth and dimension to our relationship with God, creating alike in our minds love and fear of Him.

PREREQUISITE OF FAITH IN GOD

ABOUT TAUHID, Islam does not postulate mere intellectual satisfaction as to the existence of God. It enjoins irrevocable faith in this greatest of Truths which should guide the mind to believe that all men have one supreme Master, are His slaves and are sworn to His allegiance and loyalty.

A Believer in Tauhid may well be compared to a thirsty man who cannot erase from his mind the urge for water even though otherwise occupied. Similarly, a Believer in Tauhid can never erase from his subconscious faith in God ingrained in his spirit, even when distracted by worldly chores. Though thus engaged he never really is oblivious of his faith in his Creator. This feeling is typified by the verse :

“Heart with the Beloved ;

Hand at the job” ;

and represents an acme of devotion which the Sufis acclaim as “solitude in company”. The Holy Quran also provides :

“The people whom the requirements of business do not divert from the remembrance of God ;

In fact, they are the ones who truly are aware of the secrets and the spirit of faith."

The importance and obligation of keeping faith in God ever fresh is linked to the Holy Prophet's own Traditions. Said he: "Of all speech the most important is, 'There is no God but Allah'." This means we must verbally and continually recite the name of God and sing His praises, repeating the verses the Holy Prophet directed us to. We must acknowledge our bondage to God, so our ways are illumined by His Divine Light. This must hold true in all situations—family life, business, at school or in high office. Thus alone will Tauhid become our mainstay. It is well said:

"O Friend! every such moment of my life was a period of unbelief . . . in which the heart forget you.

LOVE OF GOD

MUNDANE doctrines merely require intellectual appreciation and one may turn communist or socialist if there is enough intellectual conviction. But the Islamic doctrine of Tauhid enjoins a much deeper belief descending to every fibre of one's being and uplifting it spiritually. A Mussalman's faith is not perfect unless belief becomes his motivating emotional force. In *Sahih Bukhari*, Abdullah bin Masud's "Belief is the soul of faith" interprets this attitude. Islam requires one to build one's faith on belief than arguments. Sheikh Abdul Wahab Sha'rani has said faith emerging from argument and reasoning cannot be reliable because it keeps revolving around argument. The faith of a debator is never free of danger. Faith in a doctrine is not merely its intellectual exposition but also its mental assimilation. That way belief is transformed into overwhelming love of God and transcends love of worldly things. In the Quran the qualities of men of faith have been characterised. One of these is that they would be conspicuous by their love of God.

For some, love of God implies getting away from

it all and worshipping Him away from worldly responsibilities, away from one's wife and children, left helpless in consequence. This is not love of God but its negation and would invoke His wrath. Islam does not prohibit affection for family, nor wants withdrawal from worldly responsibilities. Imam Ibn Taimiya has said the mission of the Prophets was not to change human nature but to promote its purposeful fulfilment. Renunciation as expressive of love of God would run counter to natural instinct. True love of God requires us not to renounce the world, but to do right by our wives and children and act as nature intended us to. An exception must, however, be made when the choice is between love of God and love for worldly things. If in the name of God it becomes necessary to lay down one's life, it should be done without hesitation and in doing so our thoughts should be:

"I give up life; it was His gift.

The truth is that my obligation is still not fulfilled."

TRUE CONCEPT OF THE LOVE OF GOD

NOBODY could love God more than the Holy Prophet and his Companions. But they all pursued their trades, had wives and children and partook of the lawful pleasures. Their love of God, however, was the envy of angels. This was so because there is no incompatibility between love of God and love of other types. The only condition is that all attachments are subject to love of God. He decides which attachments are to remain or be discarded. If a person who honours the will and injunctions of God, and also loves his wife and children, opens up a shop or follows an agricultural pursuit, his acts have God's approval and his endeavours, in fact, promote his spiritual closeness to God.

God has sanctioned love for one's son but within limits. The condition is that love for a son will not stand in the way of love of God and if He required it there should be no hesitation in sacrificing the son. A case in point is the episode of Abraham. In old age he was blessed with a son, Ismael. Love that the Friend of God had for his gifted son defies estimation. But no sooner was there a hint from God than Abraham prepared to sacrifice

his son.

Islamic history has preserved an anecdote about Abu Bakr. His son once said to him: "Father, when I was a pagan and fought the Muslims, you were exposed to my view in the thick of the battle. If I had wished I could have hit you, but my love for you restrained me from putting you to any harm."

Abu Bakr Siddiq replied:

"Son! out of regard for me as your father you spared me, but I declare in the name of God that if you had been exposed to my view, I would have decapitated you with my sword."

A believer in the oneness of God himself becomes the beloved of God, and, as related in the Traditions of the Holy Prophet, God becomes his eyes, tongue, hands and feet. In consequence he sees, speaks and does what is strictly in accord with the will and pleasure of God.

STEADFASTNESS OF BELIEF IN TAUHID

STEADFASTNESS is a basic requirement of Tauhid. This means facing up to trials and tribulations with steady faith. Faith in God should not languish because of vicissitude. Mere declaration of faith in the doctrine of Tauhid is not enough. To reach the destination, "The first condition is that one should lose oneself completely in search of the goal."

There are two components of the declaration of faith in God. The first one is negative, that "There is no God." The second one is positive, that "Sovereignty befits the peerless and unique Being alone."

When one consciously denies all gods but One the false gods gather crying, "Nond but I," and try to divert one from Truth. Likewise, the clan brotherhood angrily protests when its false customs are exposed. Likewise, again, those in power are keenly anxious to retain it and a social order based on exploitation is not prepared to tolerate rebels. This apart, often one's own savage self turns faithless and tries to down men of faith at every step. Usually,

men of faith find themselves surrounded by savages rather than human beings and their entire lives become everlasting trials. All these stages stem from the "negative" component of the declaration of faith. But only by passing through these stages is positivism reached, purification from the evils of polytheism attained and complete faith in Tauhid appears. In order to escape from polytheism, Iqbal says:

"When I say that I am a Muslim, I shudder,
For I know the difficulties inherent in 'There is
no God but . . .'".

The Holy Prophet himself, while talking of faith in Tauhid, stressed the need for steadfastness. In *Sahih Muslim*, Abu Umra Sufyan bin Abdullah relates: "I requested the Holy Prophet to tell me something about Islam which would preclude the necessity of my putting any further questions about it to anyone. The Holy Prophet said, 'Say that you have faith in God, and then keep firm and be steadfast in such faith'."

The Holy Quran elaborates thus:

"When they say that Allah is their Creator and thereafter remain steadfast in such faith, then no fear shall haunt them nor will they ever come to grief. They are the People of Paradise where they will remain for ever. That will be the reward for what they have done."

In other words:

“This is the elixir of Love,
Distilled from the blood of the heart.”

PROPAGATION OF TAUHID

THE requirements of Tauhid do not end with their ritual observance and in thinking this was all God expected. Such smug belief is far from the goal and does not satisfy Islam which expects one's convictions to be widely disseminated to be universally beneficial.

One needs must convince others to worship the Creator. As long as polytheism is not obliterated, propagation of Tauhid must go on. The Holy Quran, while spelling out the purpose of the existence of Muslims, has pointed out:

“And in this way We made you the community of the middle course, so that you are witnesses for the people and the Messenger of God is a witness for you.”

Prophethood came to a close with the Holy Prophet of Islam. The task of propagating Tauhid rests with his followers. The Muslims, as a community, and every Muslim individually must perform this duty. In his well-known poem *Rumuz-i-Bekhud* (Mysteries of Selflessness), Allama Iqbal has thus reminded the Muslims of this responsibility:

“Are you not aware of the verse in the Mother of

Books (the Holy Quran), in which you have been addressed as the just community of the middle course.

The glow and glamour of Time is because of you,
And among the nations of the world you alone
are the custodian of Truth."

And again :

"The secret of your existence is enshrined in the
doctrine of Tauhid ;

The purpose of your life is to protect and project
the doctrine of the Unity of God.

If you are a Muslim you should not rest content,
Till the entire world becomes a sanctuary of
Truth."

For Muslims, Tauhid is the *sine qua non* of life.
Circumstances may favour it or not, its propagation
is an imperative. Now when the world again has
turned idol-worshipper, wealth and capital is coveted,
caste, tribe, colour and race claim allegiance and
the motherland's clay is moulded into worshipful
deity, Muslims must realise their duty and proclaim
the Unity of God midst all the profanities around.

Iqbal has said :

"In his psychological make-up, Man is maker as
well as a worshipper of idols ;

In every Age he has been in search of some
entity ;

Today he has revived the traditions of 'Azar' in

idol-making and has created new gods.

You in whose veins blood warms up to the spirit
of the Prophet Abraham,

For the vindication of Truth, wage war against
falsehood.

Strike the sword in the name of God ;

In the darkness of the Age shed Light,

And proclaim the perfect way of life revealed to
you."

EFFECTS OF THE UNITY OF GOD ON HUMAN LIFE

DEPENDENCE and servility are in human nature. Men may climb heights but they cannot refrain from bowing before somebody or worshipping something. When one sees fire and realises how numerous are human needs associated with it, one starts to worship it. The sun and the moon appear as sources of benefit to the world and one bows before them. The rivers Ganges and Jumna lend verdure to the crops and provide water, so Man begins to regard them as his saviours. Sinking still lower, man prostrates himself before man and makes clay idols with his own hands and bows before them.

Despite all its progress mankind has not been able to rid itself of dependence. While modes and methods have changed, man's worshipping urge has not. Hero-worship goes on as usual. Wealth, capital or country is apotheosised or science idolised.

The urge for dependence forces Man to kowtow in servility and sensuous animal passions and social perversities become his gods. He is overwhelmed by hundreds of such deities from which Tauhid alone enables him to break free and proclaim allegiance

to the One and only God. In the words of the poet:

“This single bow which you regard as a burden,
Frees man from a thousand irksome ones.”

Believers in one God, fortified by absolute faith in God's power alone to help or harm them, are never afraid of anybody on earth and their faith carries them through every difficulty. The true Believer will not bow before a Pharaoh, a Nimrod, a Qaroon or a Haman. He is always inspired by the injunction of God: “If you are a man of faith, do not be afraid of them. Fear Me alone.” He gets his guidance from the Holy Prophet, the greatest of all monotheists:

“If all the people of the world were to combine to enable you to derive benefit from a thing which God has not ordained for you, their efforts will be of no avail. And if all the people join hands to harm you through something against which God has ordained your protection, they shall not have the power to harm you.”

With implicit faith in God, a Believer may confront a Caesar or a Chroesis with equanimity and as an equal. If an enemy steals his sword while he sleeps and awakening him menacingly enquires, “Who now can save you from my hands?” he answers unruffled, “My God,” and the sword drops from the trembling hands of the enemy. The Believer has enormous strength of courage enabling him to confront even tyrants and point out their shortcomings.

He is never cowed down by pomp and circumstance, nor impressed by wealth and power. A wonderful change comes into his life and he feels he is not afraid of anyone but God, Who says it is wrong to be afraid of any man. As the poet says:

“A monotheist is one at whose feet you may place
heaps of gold,
Or whose head you may threaten with sword;
He has neither any expectation;
Nor is he afraid of anyone;
And indeed that is the basis of Tauhid.”

When difficulties overwhelm a Believer and he thinks of turning to others for help, he is reminded of God's injunction: “Am I not enough for My servant?” His failing steps then become steady and his soul is transported with spiritual ecstasy. If he is poor and the bounties of life are denied him, his belief that God is the Sustainer motivates his sense of honour to such an extent that he refuses to beg, as this would be derogatory to Tauhid. If while riding he drops his whip he alights and picks it up himself instead of asking another to do so.

Abu Zarr says the Holy Prophet once summoned him and asked him not to let himself come under anybody's obligation. Abu Zarr agreed, whereupon the Holy Prophet said: “If when riding, you drop your whip, alight and pick it up yourself. Do not ask anybody to pick it up for you.”

By the power of his faith a Believer always commands respect ; the means are at his disposal and the world at his beck and call. But conceit never crosses his mind. He distributes goods among the people and tells them they belong not to him but to God.

When the Holy Prophet used to distribute goods among the people, he would invariably say, "Look, I am only an agent for distributing these things. It is God Who bestows them on you."

If Tauhid is one's objective inspiration one does not get drunk with power, ego and position, but the greatest monarchs shiver on hearing such a man's name. Conquests fall to his lot, but he does not use his success to overawe the people. He declares without hesitation : "My people., if today I command authority over you as your Caliph I very well remember that till yesterday I shepherded goats "

In poverty a Believer's heart is contented ; he is never ungrateful or impatient but is always grateful to the Almighty ; he does not complain. He has faith that whatever is ordained for him by the Sustainer will necessarily happen. If it is His will that he should be poor it must be regarded as a blessing so as to endow him with patience, gratitude and contentment. The sacred Tradition stated below firms up his faith. "God says: Among My servants there are some who will not be righteous except in affluence and richness and if I turn them into beggars it will be their undoing.

And again there are some who will not be virtuous unless they are beggars and mendicants. If I make them wealthy, wealth will destroy their faith. There are some who will not remain on the right path except through health and vitality, and if I make them sick, sickness will adversely affect their faith. Again, there are those whose faith can last only through sickness, and if they become healthy, their health would undermine their faith. I am fully aware of the aptitudes of My servants and I do My work accordingly."

When the true Believer is at the helm of affairs, fear of God infuses in him a sense of responsibility that forces him to provide the necessities of life for all of his subjects. His solicitude goes to the extent that: "If on the banks of the Tigris even a dog dies of hunger, Umar would be held accountable." The Believer does not regard public funds as personal property but rather as orphans' property whose misappropriation would invite hell-fire. There were rulers who even practised economy in the use of official stationery. Ordered one: "Do not write in bold letters but in a fine hand leaving little space. On the same sheet write of as many matters as possible; the Muslims do not stand for formalities which entail an unnecessary burden on the Exchequer."

Such a man draws only as much by way of emolu-

ments as would suffice for bare existence. When death approaches, he instructs his heirs : "The amount I had drawn should be calculated and returned to the treasury out of the income from my private property." In his will he instructs his daughter : "When I die the utensils of the Muslims, their slave, their camel, their grindstones and the two bed-sheets which I used for wearing and bed-cover should be returned to them" (Will of Abu Bakr in favour of his daughter Ayesha).

ONE GOD, ONE MANKIND AND ONE SYSTEM

THE world today stands divided because of colour, race and nationalism. Even in Europe colour riots frequently occur. But on the foundations of "collective mankind" provided by TAUHID can be raised a social order at once pure and undiscriminating. Such an order is possible on the principle enunciated by the Holy Prophet, the greatest exponent of Tauhid :

"All of you are the descendants of Adam and Adam was created of the earth. No Arab is superior to a non-Arab, nor a non-Arab superior to an Arab except in the matter of piety" (Sermon at the Farewell Pilgrimage).

If society was built on such a golden principle everyone would have like right to the opportunities of life, there would be no monopolies of a family or group and every votary of Tauhid would share equally in power and authority. In such a society government would not be modelled on the monarchical pattern but on the supremacy of the people; Bilal from Abyssinia, Suhaib from Rum, Salman from Persia, and Faruq or Siddiq from Arabia would

have equal rights; geographical barriers and linguistic or racial differences would have no place; the wail of a distressed woman on the Indian coast would be heard by the ruler of Arabia; there would be respect for humanity, and ruler and ruled, lord and slave, would be treated alike with fraternal love.

Let us quote an incident. A son of Amr bin al-As, the ruler of Egypt, once whipped an Egyptian for no apparent reason. When the case was reported to Amr, he wanted the Egyptian to avenge himself on the ruler's son. Addressing his son he said :

“Since when have you made the people your slaves, although they were born free out of their mother's wombs?”

To end racial and other conflicts Western philosophers are today aiming at world government. The aim, however, is incapable of realisation until the world is converted to the revolutionary concept of Tauhid and unity of mankind. Tauhid provides the guidelines for collectivity and all who believe in it regard themselves as members of a universal brotherhood.

“Our purpose and object, our ways and modes and our way of thinking is all one.

Because of such teachings we have become brothers unto one another. We are all of one tongue, one mind, and one body.”

Chapter II

PROPHETHOOD

*Our existence in the world is because of Prophethood,
Our religion and our law is because of Prophethood,
Because of Prophethood myriads of us are one;
And every part of us bound up with the other.*

TOWARDS THE RIGHT WAY

WHEN we look around us we are conscious of the gracious bounties of Him Who has provided us with all our wants, blessed us with eyes to look and tongue to speak ; Who has pressed the moon, the sun, the stars, the winds, and the water to our service and, by investing us with intelligence, determination and consciousness, has raised us in eminence above all living things.

No one dare say that the merciful and bountiful God Who has made such perfect arrangement for meeting human needs would not guide human beings along the right path. Human needs are not confined to eating and drinking which are mere animal instincts. The inner Man needs something more ; he needs spiritual sustenance and to know the way of being pure and clean, obeying his Creator and discovering the right path across the conflicts of life. The inner Man finds that the world is in search of life and is enamoured of it. But his conscious self asks, "After all, what is the purpose of life?"

"The world wants life,

But what does life itself,

If God were not to satisfy man's spiritual urge,

His merciful attributes would not function. These attributes would be negated if He left the world to grope in the dark and did not come to its rescue. So God has answered the need of His creatures Himself and showed them the right way.

Say the Holy Quran :

“And it is the responsibility of God alone to show the right way, when tortuous ways are also there.”

The means that God has chosen to indicate the right way to mankind is known as Prophethood.

THE NEED OF PROPHETHOOD

WHILE intelligence could direct us to the conclusion that God exists, we could not, unaided, discover more details about Him. If God exists, what are His likes and dislikes, what pleases and displeases Him, what lies beyond Death? Each of these questions demands an answer. By allowing fancy to roam we may get confused answers, but this could conceivably result in everyone manufacturing an answer of his own. That would destroy unity of thought and involve humanity in endless confusion. Besides being badly damaged, our minds would wallow in uncertainty and no one would, for sure, be able to say his answer was correct and sensible.

Allama Iqbal has said :

“Through intelligence the traveller is able to see,
What is intelligence—it is a lamp by the wayside,
But what strife goes on within the house?
The lamp by the wayside cannot be aware.”

Actually, there is but one answer to these questions: there has to be a source directly aware of the Truth. This is much like the way we do the things ourselves. When sick, we do not know how to get

well, so we turn to a doctor, the man who knows all about such matters. When we litigate, we need a lawyer, as he alone knows the intricacies of law. We endorse the findings of scientists because we acknowledge them as experts. In the same way where God is concerned we must rely on personalities to whom God has revealed Himself. Such personalities are Prophets or Messengers of God.

The history of Prophets tells us that no Messenger of God ever invited the people to have faith in him and that every one of them merely said :

“And I know from God that which you do not.”

About them the Creator of the Universe has furnished evidence :

“Whatever he speaks he speaks not of his own desires, but projects whatever has been revealed unto him.”

The best thing for mankind, therefore, is to have faith in such holy personages, and, instead of being lost in the intellect's whirlpool, rely on the knowledge transmitted to it through the Prophets.

THE WAY TO SAFETY

THE fact that Prophets get their knowledge direct from God has been explained by the Holy Prophet through an episode. In Arabia it was customary that when a person wanted to warn his countrymen of impending danger he would climb up a pedestal and cry: "O, people." Sensing danger the people would run to listen to him. The Holy Prophet himself, on one occasion, adopted the method for making his announcement.

He climbed up Mount Safa, and from its summit summoned the people. Those who heard the call ran to Safa. Excited, they felt something big was going to happen as the person raising the call was well known for his truthfulness and honesty. The Holy Prophet then addressed them, "O people! what opinion do you hold of me?" They said, "We regard you as truthful and trustworthy. In keeping faith, we know of none superior to you." The Holy Prophet said, "If I tell you that behind this hill the troops of the enemy lie hidden and that they might fall upon you at any moment, would you believe what I say?" The Quraish of Mecca realising that the person talking had never lied and was standing at a

height from where he could see both sides of the hill, while they at the base could not see the other side, answered with one voice: "O Mohammad! we would certainly believe what you say." His status thus acknowledged, the Holy Prophet explained the dangers to his listeners and warned them of the punishment of God.

Glory to God! What a captivating illustration by the Holy Prophet to underscore the eminence of Prophets! Ordinary people had gathered at the foot of the hill. Before them was the hill of life. Even if they were anxious to see what lay beyond the hill they could not do so. They could only see what lay on their side of it. The Prophet himself stood at a vantage point from where he could clearly see what lay on both sides. He knew life and of the hereafter and his character was toweringly above stigma.

So which way is safety for us? Should we allow our fancy to try and conjecture what lies beyond the hill or should we, with better wisdom, believe the great men who stand at the pinnacle and can see what lies beyond? Reflect and decide.

VERACITY OF PROPHETS

PROPHETS of God commissioned to show the right way were men of peerless character. Even their enemies were forced to admit to a sense of admiration for their piety. Reflection increases one's own faith in the Prophets because of this. Here is an interesting episode. Abu Sufyan went to the court of the Byzantine emperor to seek his assistance against the Holy Prophet of Islam. It was a very critical moment for him but even then he could not help acknowledging the truthfulness and honesty of the Holy Prophet. The Byzantine emperor enquired whether there had ever been an allegation of Mohammad telling a lie. Abu Sufyan said, "No." The emperor then enquired whether Mohammad had ever broken a pledge. Abu Sufyan said, "No." The emperor exclaimed loudly, "He who does not lie to men, how can he lie about God?"

What possible personal benefit, after all, could the Prophets derive from speaking about the hereafter? Did they need honour or prestige? These were already theirs even before they had declared their prophetic missions. Already they were respected men, trusted and known for their exemplary

character. Their preachings, in fact, plunged them into endless hardships. Some of them had their heads hacked off, others were exiled, many were murdered and several put to death before their missions were successfully accomplished. Yet, tortures notwithstanding, they went ahead with the mission to summon men to Truth. People offered temptations, wealth, gold, beautiful women. They were promised crowns, but they spurned the offers with contempt. Such sincere, selfless and pure souls were definitely commissioned by God, and their message of Truth admits of no doubt.

An interesting thought is that one hundred and twenty-four thousand Prophets were not born in a particular age. They were commissioned for different countries, but there is no difference or inconsistency in their message. From Adam to the last of the Prophets, Mohammad (peace be upon him), there is a surprising consistency in the contents of the messages of all the Prophets, while all other ideologies have been changing with the change of times. Till yesterday scientists believed in the theory of evolution. Today, most of them believe otherwise. But the concepts which the Prophets of God presented about the Unity of God, Prophethood, Resurrection, Destiny and Angels have not changed at any time.

In daily life if some people make a declaration

with certainty we accept them at their word. On the other hand, we have one hundred and twenty-four thousand personages of sterling character speaking to us of basic truths in an unbroken chain, but we delay putting our faith in them. Indeed,

“The faculty of speech is at a loss to say what should be said about this.”

REASONING OF IMAM GHAZALI

AS with the doctrine of the Unity of God, the so-called intellectual is confronted with the difficulty, with his limited understanding, of trying to assess the information imparted by the Prophets about the Unknown. He is assailed by the thought that when intellect cannot conceive it, how can matters be communicated by divine revelation? Imam Ghazali has dispelled such doubts in a forceful way. He gives the illustration of a dream. When our sight, hearing and other senses are not working and we are unconscious, certain events and realities are symbolically revealed to us. We would normally regard such revelations as against reason and argue that as intelligence and feelings arise out of the working of such senses there can be no revelation when they do not function.

The Imam says that from the intellectual point of view there is certainly scope for such an objection, but experience provides evidence that during sleep one dreams of things which often prove absolutely true. We may often observe things by pure symbols whose significance can be understood through interpretation. Thus clearly, suspension of the function-

ing of the senses does not debar the means of communication.

Elaborating, Imam Ghazali holds that Prophethood is the name of a spiritual station where intellect does not work, but where to a Prophet unknown facts are revealed which are beyond human intelligence and understanding. To this intellect can only say:

“If I were to make more flights even of a hair breadth,
The intensity of refulgence would burn my wings.”

A person can say that unless he sees such a station of Prophethood himself he cannot believe in it, but Imam Ghazali says this argument would be like a blind man saying unless he could see the colours he could not recognise them.

The Holy Quran has said:

“O Mohammad! tell them: I do not say unto you that I possess the treasures of God, nor do I say that I have knowledge of the Unknown, nor do I say that I am an angel. I merely follow the Revelation that descends on me. Then ask of them whether the blind and those with eyes can be at par. Can you not reflect?”

THE ROLE OF PROPHETS

UNLESS a person informs his servant of his likes and dislikes and tell him his duties, his punishing the servant for lapses would be unjust and unfair. Apply this simile to the relationship between God and His servants. If God punished us (as He is always entitled to do) without giving us His commands it would be a negation of His attribute of Justice as people would turn round and say : We were never told the truth, so why the reproach ? Therefore, God commissioned His Prophets to guide us so we may not make excuses. Says the Holy Quran :

“If God had destroyed them as a chastisement before the advent of any Prophet they would have certainly offered the excuse : O God, why didst Thou not send us a Messenger so that before being put to shame we could have followed Thine Commandments ?”

God has said :

“We do not chastise a people unless We have sent to them a Messenger.”

When Prophets appear their role is not of mere messengers ; they are God's representatives. He who is cut off from them is cut off from God and he who

is united with them is united to God. Submission and loyalty to Prophets is loyalty to God and disobedience of them, disobedience of God. A person may be loyal to his king but if he refuses to acknowledge the king's appointed deputy, he would deny the king's own authority, just as much as loyalty to the king's representatives would be like being loyal directly to the king. This has been elaborated by Imam Razi thus :

“He who has denied Prophethood and Messenger-ship of God has indeed remained unfortunate enough to be deprived of the knowledge of God.”

Take the example of Christians. They made a mistake in not realising the role of Jesus. This resulted in their being confused about God and in their talking of Unity in Trinity and Trinity in Unity. History is witness that people forgetting the teachings of their Prophet or failing to realise his status were cut off from reality by baseless philosophies and concepts. The teachings of Prophets are the foundations on which the religious edifice stands. Remove one stone and the edifice crumbles.

If crooked, the mason the first brick lays,
To the firmament crooked the building sways.

PROPHETS WERE HUMAN BEINGS

ACCORDING to Islam a Prophet is neither the incarnation of God, nor does God manifest Himself in a Prophet's garb. In plain terms Islam proclaims that Prophets were human beings. When Christians realised that Jesus was born without a father they evolved the baseless idea that he was the son of God. But, according to Islam, Adam was born without father and mother. And he was the father of mankind.

Peculiar thinking in every age has denied the humanness of Prophets. But if the Prophets were not human, what were they? They could not be God because God is above partnership. They could not be angels, as mankind is superior to angels. In the presence of angels, the vesting by God of the vicegerency in mankind clearly pointed to the superiority of human beings to angels. To what type of creation, then, do Prophets belong? In truth, Man has always forgotten that he is God's pre-eminent creation, regarded by Him as alone worthy of His representation. It was mankind's privilege that Prophets and Messengers of God arose from it. More unfortunate, therefore, that ignoramuses, not appreciating that

Prophets too were men, should try and associate them with another type of creation. Prophets appeared as guides, but if they were not human, how could they serve as models of perfect men? If they were ignorant of grief and distress, how could they console? If they did not know hunger and thirst, how could they assuage the hungry and the thirsty? If pain was unknown to them, how could they alleviate suffering? If they were not human beings, we could excuse ourselves before God by saying we cannot follow the trail which the Prophets blazed. This was precisely why God raised Prophets from among men, so there was no ground for excuse.

In the Holy Quran, the humanness of Prophets has been elaborated in various verses:

“Are you surprised at this that God reminded you through a man who belonged to your own community and warned you so that you may become righteous, and God may show you His mercy” (Sura Araf).

“O Mohammad! the Prophets We sent before you were all human beings, and were the residents of these settlements” (Sura Yusuf).

“The Messengers said: Indeed we are naught but men like you, but from His servants God confers eminence on those whom He wishes” (Sura Ibrahim).

THE CONDITION FOR SALVATION

ACCORDING to a Tradition there were one hundred and twenty-four thousand Prophets between Adam and the Holy Prophet of Islam. Among these, whose names have been preserved in holy books and history, there is none but the Holy Prophet of Islam whose law has remained intact in original form. Christianity is counted among the great religions of the world. But the historical value of its Holy Book is that out of numerous large and small Bibles, the majority of Christians consider only four as authentic, and even these were written by men who had never seen Christ. How the authors got hold of their material, and what were their sources of information, is not known. To cap it all, doubts are now being raised whether the authors, to whom these four Bibles are attributed, ever compiled them. Some American critics have been audacious enough to doubt the very existence of Jesus himself.

Moses was another illustrious Prophet. But the book attributed to him was, according to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, written several hundred years after him. That is why in Old and New Testaments

are passages which it would be insulting to attribute to the Prophets. Revoltingly enough, there are even allegations of immorality against these sacred persons. How did these Divine Books lend themselves to modification and interpolation? When we consider this question in the light of the Quran, it appears that all these Prophets were commissioned for a particular age, a particular people and a particular country. The law they preached was not of universal character and there was no need to preserve it permanently. As such, these laws must gradually have been interpolated until the advent of the last of the Prophets, about whom the Quran has proclaimed :

“O Mohammad ! say to mankind : For you all I am the Messenger of God Who is the Sovereign of Earth and Heavens.”

Mohammad (peace be upon him) was sent as guide and leader of all the people of the west as well as the east, for Arabia as well as Persia. Faith in him was the condition of salvation for the whole of mankind. God even took a pledge from the preceding Prophets to the effect that if the last Prophet's advent took place during their lifetime, they would believe in him and support him.

They Holy Quran says :

“And God took a pledge from the Prophets : When I reveal a Book to you and make you wise

and there comes to you a Messenger of God who corroborates the Book revealed to you, believe in him and render him help and assistance.”

FAITH IN THE HOLY PROPHET IS ESSENTIAL

TO some, faith in the Holy Prophet of Islam is not a prerequisite to salvation. They consider that even after his coming those who continued to follow the law of Moses or Jesus will not be held to account on the Day of Resurrection. Regrettably, some Muslim theologians have expressed opinions more or less to the same effect. But the Quran, the Traditions and the conduct of the Holy Prophet and his Companions negate this view.

It is related by Jabir that the Holy Prophet said :
 “Do not ask about any religious matter from the People of the Book for they who have lost the way themselves cannot offer you guidance. If you corroborate them the probability is that you may corroborate something wrong and if you deny something the danger is that you may deny some truth. If today Moses were alive and in your midst he would follow me and it would be unlawful for him to follow the Old Testament in a way repugnant to my law.”

The Holy Quran has ordained the People of the Book to have faith in the Holy Prophet of Islam in the following words :

“And they should follow this Prophet whom they find mentioned both in the Old the New Testaments.”

The Holy Quran claims that people who have knowledge of Divine Books cannot deny the prophethood of the Prophet of Islam. In Sura “Thunder,” it is provided :

“The disbelievers say you are not commissioned by God. Say, that between you and me the evidence of God is enough, and this is the evidence of every person who has knowledge of Divine Books.”

These Quranic verses are clear evidence that after the advent of the Holy Prophet everyone Jew or Christian, must believe in the Prophet of Islam. In Old and New Testaments, despite interpolations, clear indications foretelling the advent of the Holy Prophet are available and people advised to follow him.

Imam Ibn Taimiya has collected such prophecies in a book written by him alongwith necessary annotations. After going through them one cannot help but shed tears over those who, overwhelming evidence notwithstanding, are deprived of Islam's blessings.

In Deuteronomy (11 : 15) it is said :

“The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of Thee, of thy brethren,

like unto me ; unto him ye shall hearken."

The 18th verse of the same chapter of Deutro-
nomy has :

"I will raise up a Prophet from among their
brethren like unto thee, and will put my words
in his mouth and he shall speak unto them all that
I shall command him."

In the Gospel of John it is said :

"But when the comforter is come whom I will
send unto thee from the Father even the Spirit
of truth which proceedeth from the Father he shall
testify me" (15 : 26).

And study the following reference and see how
the advent of the Holy Prophet of Islam has been
propheied in unambiguous terms :

"Jehovah came from Sinai

And rose from Seir unto them,

He sparkled forth from Mount Paran

And he came with one thousand of the holy ones

And in his right hand was a fiery law for them."

THE HOLY PROPHET WAS THE GREATEST SPIRITUAL HEALER

TALK to a doctor and he would tell you there is a different treatment for a child, an adult and an old man. The medicine dose for a child would not do for an adult. In prescribing treatment the temperament of a patient and his environment have to be considered Phlegmatic persons would require different treatment from bilious ones. Those belonging to cold regions are different from persons living in warm climates and a doctor treating bodily ailments keeps this factor in view.

With this illustration in mind try and understand the spiritual maladies and the ways and methods of treating them. Since the dawn of creation God has sent Prophets to treat our souls. But to say that the law meant for the times of Adam or Noah was adequate for all times would be fallacious. Divine laws meant for humanity's childhood cannot serve it in its maturity. The nature of every age and of ailments differ. If a treatment is prescribed without considering different temperaments and environments it will not be effective. Till the times of Jesus and other Prophets before him, human intellect had

not fully developed. The laws given to their communities could not suffice for our troubles. The need in view of the developments that were to take place in the ages to follow was for a complete and perfect law to provide for and understand mankind's spiritual requirements till eternity. Such a law was revealed to the Holy Prophet of Islam, the last of the Prophets. After his advent God abrogated all previous religious laws. If one believes in Jesus and Moses but denies the prophethood of Mohammad (peace be upon him), it would be like recognising the artist while denying his chief and leader. Imam Ibn Taimiya in his book, "The Correct Answer," has given some interesting examples :

"It would be like saying that Zifar bin al-Qasim Mazini and Asran were great jurists, but Abu Hanifa, Shafi'i, and Malik were not jurists ; that Maliki and Masihi, the author of medical books, were physicians but Hippocrates and Galen were not; that Kushia and Khulfi knew astronomy but Ptolemy had no knowledge of the subject ; that David, Ezekiel, Habbakkuk and Daniel were Prophets but Mohammad bin Abdullah (peace be upon him) was not. The perversity of such a man and the impropriety of what he says would be more glaring than all the examples given above."

THE REFUGE OF MANKIND

NOBODY in the world can do without aids and supports. If the help of wealth, friends and relatives, ways and means, are not his, a man feels lost. He needs these props at every step, and in his life's journey he cannot completely do without them.

History, however, provides a glaring exception, that of Mohammad (may peace be upon him). All supports were denied him but the world knows how this helpless man, an Arabian orphan, became its greatest benefactor.

The love and affection of a father is regarded as the first step in the development of a child, but this was not available to him. His mother could have filled the emptiness in his life, but she died a little later. His grandfather extended him the warmth of love, but it was written by the "Invisible Hand" that Mohammad (peace be upon him) was not to have the blessings of this support either and his grandfather too passed away. Thus deprived of father, mother and a loving grandfather, the child was looked after by his kind uncle, Abu Talib, who left no stone unturned for him despite poverty. What-

ever young Mohammad (peace be upon him) earned shepherding goats and camels he placed at the disposal of Abu Talib to meet household expenses. In fact Abu Talib's circumstances were so straitened that he was forced to entrust the custody of one of his sons, Jafar Tayyar, to his brother, Abbas. In effect, therefore, instead of his uncle providing support to young Mohammad, the latter became a source of material help to his uncle.

In education and acquisition of knowledge students have need for certificates from schools or institutions. They have to sit at the feet of a teacher or scholar to learn. Mohammad's teacher and master was God. In this particular also Mohammad (peace be upon him) was independent of aid from any worldly source. We worship wealth and money to succeed and when we get it we use it pompously. Mohammad (peace be upon him) acquired wealth after his marriage to Khadija, but instead of using it to acquire power and position he spent it to alleviate the sufferings of the poor, the widows and the orphans.

We regard the nation and the country as factors in the success and building up of individuals. For us every particle of the motherland's dust has the sanctity of a deity. The people midst whom Mohammad (peace be upon him) was born had, however, no identity as a nation. They were divided into

tribes and groups, at best a crowd, whose thinking was low, habits disgraceful and abominable. Their country could not support any agriculture. It was lashed by hot winds and comprised nothing but hillocks and stony wastes. Who then can say that the bewildering success Mohammad (peace be upon him) had was the result of a national or patriotic upsurge? While none of the stays and supports that matter was available to the Holy Prophet, the success that crowned his efforts, his teachings, his wisdom and learning, was unique and unparalleled. Ponder and say whether this single factor is not enough for us to believe in him.

THE GREATEST MIRACLE

ALL the Prophets were endowed with the power of miracles but accounts of such miracles are no longer available to us as historical events. We come to know of them through Divine Books or from occasional mentions in history. But of the miracles performed by the Holy Prophet some persist to this day and will certainly endure till eternity. Those who deny the truth can check them even now. This will affirm their faith in the prophethood of Mohammad (peace be upon him).

As is known, the Holy Prophet was illiterate. He had not learnt a single syllable from anyone. He never frequented literary or poetical circles. He was never admitted to a school. Even before prophethood his life was so pure and pious that friends and foes alike were convinced of his honesty and truthfulness. Astonishingly, suddenly after forty years, the world heard from his tongue divine words, the eloquence, maturity, objectivity and wisdom of which are proverbial. The Quran embodying the profoundest wisdom and containing the best guidelines on every aspect of individual and collective life, regulating the conduct of the individual as well

as of society, is there for all to see. Could such a code be presented by a person who was illiterate? Sceptics thought the Book was of human authorship, but the Quran itself gave the word :

“And if you are under some misconception about this Book which We have revealed to Our special Emissary, compile just a fragment which should be of the same standards as this Book, and you may therein seek the assistance of your supporters who do not believe in God. And if you cannot do that, and certainly you will never be able to do so, then be afraid of Hell the fuel whereof are stones and men.”

This challenge was addressed to those whose eloquence and linguistic skill was acknowledged by all and for whom the rest of the world was dumb. In their hatred of Islam and its Prophet they were prepared to wade through rivers of blood, and spend any amounts of money to bring Islam into disrepute. The challenge of Islam was an opportunity for them to humble it and its Prophet, if they could. But they remained tongue-tied and could not produce anything like the Quran.

The challenge was not to eloquence and depth of thought alone ; it pertained as much to wisdom and brilliance of the subject-matter. Till today, after the lapse of fourteen centuries, the world has not been able to give an effective reply. Let us refer to the

Orientalists. To what extent have they not gone in their enmity of Islam? They levelled allegations, they tried to create misunderstandings, but even they were forced to bow before the miracle of the Quran and the beauty of its message. Recently a book, *What Happened in History*, was published in England. It contains, besides discussion on other religions and creeds, a reference to Islam. About the Quran at the very outset the author writes :

“After a study of the Quran, it will have to be conceded that its author, whosoever he may be, is a teacher not only of his own age, but of many other ages as well. The first thing that strikes one is that the author of the Quran is a person endowed with great intellect and reason. In every line he takes pains to ensure that no claim is advanced without proper proof and argument. His thoughts resemble those of a wise man who considers matters of universal importance only, and draws conclusions from them. This quality of the Quran at first bewilders a man, then attracts him and finally captivates him.”

Many books in the world have elicited admiration. Innumerable writings have influenced the human temperament, manners and habits, but the wonderful revolution that the Quran has brought into human life is unparalleled. The

Book made of camel-grazers rulers of men and transformed ignorant bedouins into high moralists. On the one hand it produced generals like Khalid, Tariq and Mohammad bin Qasim, and on the other, scholars and wise men like Ali, Ayesha, Ibn Masud, and Ibn Abbas. Rulers like Abu Bakr Siddiq, Umar Faruq, and Umar bin Abdul Aziz drank at its fountain and saints like Abu Zarr, and Abu Huraira reflected on its world-encompassing beauty. The sun and the moon merely dispel darkness but the Quran's light has dispelled the darkness of the mind, and illuminated it alike from without and within. The great impression that the Quran has made on human minds because of its sanctity and grandeur, much more than other sacred Books, is ineffaceable. Several books are claimed holy and revealed by God, but how many of these are remembered? Firstly, they are incapable of being memorised, but even if they could be, they are likely to be soon forgotten. Contrarily, the Holy Quran is the living book that even in this decadent age has been committed to memory by tens of thousands. It lends itself with facility to the tongues of children as to those of the aged. If, unfortunately, it were to disappear, it could be dictated by its lovers down to its small grammatic detail. There have been believers in several books, but none has captivated its believers to the extent that they refuse to be rewarded

for transcribing it. Emperor Aurangzeb's work in Persian has been preserved to this day at Aurangabad, Deccan, in which he said: "In legacy the details of the amount in cash are such and such; such and such a lady shall have so many dirhams which I earned by the making of handkerchiefs and the embroidering of caps. So and so shall have so many dirhams which I earned by writing the Holy Quran. Although this amount is rather large I do not approve that it should pay for my shroud because the amount realised was from the sale of transcripts bearing the verses of God. Although the sale of divine verses is not prohibited, the position more or less is that and I would feel ashamed to be covered with such a shroud when I appear before God. Therefore, the amount under the second head realised from the making of handkerchiefs and caps, though small, should be utilised for purchasing a shroud of ordinary cloth for me."

The will of this saint-king typifies the respect in which the teachings of the Quran are held. It is said in the Quran the divine verses should not be sold for an insignificant amount. While the grace of God can compensate for it, nothing in the world can.

Among the Holy Books claimed as revealed, the Quran's contents alone have the unique distinction of originality. No book other than the Holy Quran

claims descent from God. The holy books, according to their believers, are, by their scope and meaning, divine. The Quran does not merely say that every word of it comes directly from God; it declares God's responsibility for it in these terms; "O Prophet, this account which We are revealing to you, We will protect Ourselves." It did not fall to the lot of any other book to be preserved word for word within the hearts of millions. The distinction is peculiar to the Quran. Since the times of the Prophet to the present time, it has lingered on the tongues of millions across the span of centuries.

There is another aspect of the great miracle of the last of the Prophets—the Holy Prophet of Islam. All know that after migration from Mecca only ten years of freedom in Medina were allowed to him. History says, of these ten years, six were spent in wars and crusades and battles against Jews, disbelievers and heretics. He thus had only four years to establish a system of government in Medina on the basis of the Quran. He established it so well that it is a model for Muslims and non-Muslims alike and an example without a parallel. The authority of governments extends to human bodies alone; but the government established on the basis of the Quran regulated by law the spiritual world as well. The law was respected in daylight and in darkness, in secret and in open, in every place and

at every time. Those guilty of violation, even when nobody else knew of such breach, came of their own accord to the law officer to seek punishment.

The guidelines of government furnished by the Quran are not limited to time and place Human beings could benefit from their use even today. The author of *What Happened in History* writes :

“I say even to the extent that European pacts, European defensive measures, Europe’s political alliances and the proposal for an international parliament or government and all such steps would be futile if their foundations were not laid on a proper appreciation of the concept of God and moral values. When so many measures for world peace have been tried, religion should also be. If someone is prepared for this, I would advise that in no circumstances should he overlook the Quran as no other book could provide him better guidance on the subject.”

On this aspect of the Quran’s miracle the famous English historian, Gibbon, wrote :

“From the Atlantic ocean to the river Ganges, it has been admitted that the Quran is the spirit of parliament, provides the foundation for law, not only for the principles of religion, but even for penal and civil law. The fact is that the religious law of Mohammad [peace be upon him] comprehends everything. This religious

law has been framed on the basis of such wise principles and legal norms that there can be no parallel to it throughout the world" (*Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire*).

THE NOBLE EXAMPLE OF THE HOLY PROPHET

NO single book in history has been responsible for creating a revolution. Men usually are not impressed with principles not tested in practical application. The Quran is a living Book but Muslims today have not an iota of the character of the Prophet's honoured Companions. This does not mean the Quran has lost its revolutionary attributes. They are there and will continue for ever. But the difference is that we are no longer blessed with the presence and company of the Great Teacher, every moment of whose sacred life was the embodiment of the Quran.

The Quran itself has said :

"It is We Who commissioned from among the illiterates a Messenger, who reads to them divine verses, purifies them and teaches them knowledge and wisdom. Verily, before this they were in complete ignorance."

If we want to shed our ignorance we should make the life and teachings of the Holy Prophet our guiding lodestar. God has said :

"In the pure life of the Holy Prophet is the best

practical model for you.”

Many preachers who came to the world preached well. They preached principles, golden principles. Very few of them, however, set personal examples. What distinguishes the Holy Prophet is his complete personal adherence to all he preached by trying out each lesson on himself. He preached that prayers should be offered five times a day but he himself prayed eight times—supererogatory prayers after daybreak, at noon and during the night, besides the five prescribed prayers. His Companions said that when he offered prayers they could hear his heart beating like a boiling kettle; his tears during prayer produced a sound like a grinding hand-mill. Throughout the night he would stand before God on the prayer mat until his feet were swollen. Tears would roll down from his eyes in an unbroken chain. Then the Mother of Believers, Ayesha, would implore: “O Prophet of God, you are innocent. What is the need of such prayers and rigours for you?” And the Holy Prophet would say: “Should I not be a grateful servant of God?”

He prescribed a month's fasting for Muslims in a year but for him there was hardly a month or a week in which he did not fast, and he would fast for two or three days at a stretch. The Companions would enquire: “O Prophet of God, should we follow you in this also?” The Holy Prophet would

reply, "No, you cannot follow me over this because my God feeds ME in a mysterious way."

The Holy Prophet preached continence and contentment. Though ruler of Arabia he slept on a bare mat, his body bearing the mat's imprint when he woke. The Companions would say, "O Prophet of God, if you will permit us, we shall prepare a bed for you," and he would reply, "How am I concerned with matters of the world? I am like a traveller who rests for a while under the shade of a tree and then continues his journey." Poverty and austerity are known to the world but seldom has the daughter of a Prophet come to her father to show him the blisters on her hands, saying: "Father, see what grinding has done to my hands and carrying waterskins to my body. A maidservant may please be given to me." The Holy Prophet replied: "Fatima, a maidservant cannot be given to you. They are meant for widows and the indigent of Medina."

Which princess would,

"Grinding the hand-mill recite the Quran all the time?"

Who would reject wealth, gold and silver and prefer a life of continence and abstinence?

The Holy Prophet says that in presenting him the stony wastes of Mecca, God told him that, if he so desired, He would convert all of it to gold. The Prophet had replied:

“My God, all I want is that if I eat my fill on one day I should remain hungry for one day also; when I am hungry I should weep before Thee and remember Thee, and when my belly is full I should praise and adore Thee, and offer Thee my gratitude.”

When the Holy Prophet advised the acquisition of knowledge and said if this meant undertaking a journey unto China it should be done, he was voicing his profound respect for knowledge. In the early days whenever there was a suspension of revelation from God to him he would become restless and appeared disgusted with life.

The Quran provides evidence :

“With regard to the Quran do not move your tongue for the purpose that you may grasp it quickly ;

Surely its collection and teaching is Our responsibility. Thus when We read it follow you such reading.

Its exposition also is Our responsibility.”

A living embodiment of the dictum “Have faith in God and be steadfast in such faith,” the Prophet showed a strength of character that rose above the physical pain of being stoned. He put up with insults and taunts and courageously bore upto privation of confinement. Even when blood flowed from his head to foot there was no let up in his constancy

and determination. He had no complaint for God.
His request in prayer was no more than :
“O Lord, guide my people for they know not.”

THE DISTINCTIVE POSITION OF THE HOLY PROPHET

THE world we live in comprises of many types of persons. There are persons known for their knowledge and learning. There are others who might be termed barbarous and ignorant. Many rely on reason to guide them ; others will not be satisfied with anything less than miracles. Kings and beggars exist side by side in the world whose scheme of things emphasises contrasts. As the poet has said :

“The garden’s beauty is in the flowers of varying hues,

The beauty of this garden is in its variety.”

It stands to reason that the personage endowed with the quality of a perfect model for mankind should not be so for a few, but this light should fall on all. The depths and heights illuminated by him should be the beacon guiding the learned and the erudite, providing mental contentment to the ignorant and the bedouins, impressing the old and inspiring the young, satisfying king and beggar, rich and poor alike. The Holy Prophet’s life inspires the view :

“The bloom of his beauty keeps the world fresh,

In men of beauty recognise men who know.”

We know very little about the lives of the Prophets including Moses and Jesus. Of some, we know nothing beyond their names.

Even those about whom the world claims to know, except for a few events, the details are missing. Jesus and Moses are considered founders of two great religions and they have a great following even now. But few details about their lives are known, and these also are inadequate. The Old Testament gives clues about the life of Moses. The Jews themselves say the Book disappeared on several occasions. Many times, all its copies were burnt and now its translations only are available. No trace is left of the original Book and the most grievous thing about it is that the Testament believed to have been revealed to Moses contains stories about the death and burial of Moses himself.

About the New Testament, considered the sole source on the life of Jesus, the position is worse. Christians had hundreds, nay, thousands of Bibles and out of these four are regarded as authentic. How these four were selected, is a story by itself. In 329 A.D. Constantine the Great convened a Conference of the clergy in a Byzantine city, “Nical” in which three hundred delegates participated. The Emperor presiding, the conference dragged on for two months. Finally, all the Bibles were piled

up in a church, and the clergy prostrated before God to pray: 'O God, may the false Bibles be destroyed.'" It is said God accepted their prayer and all Bibles except four were destroyed. These came to be regarded as authentic.

Books whose authenticity is thus deduced cannot be relied upon, but even if they are genuine in their present form, they do not help reconstruct the life stories of their illustrious Prophets. The Old Testament says Moses lived to be a hundred and twenty years but, beyond passing references to a few main events, there is a general vacuum in the Book. There is no account anywhere of the everyday life of Moses or the way he ordered the social life of his community. The New Testament says Jesus lived only thirty-three years. Of these mention is made only of events in the last three years of his life while the remaining details are missing. But details of the life of him of whose advent Jesus foretold: "It is better for you that I go for he who has to come will not come until I go," have been correctly preserved without a shadow of doubt or variation and are the most precious heritage of mankind. The pious ones who inhaled the fragrance of this flower and passed on its perfume to us, have been counted at more than one hundred thousand.

Every event of the Holy Prophet's life has been related by eight to ten narrators and his great and

glorious historical biography is so complete and comprehensive that, even though the Holy Prophet is no longer with us, every aspect of his holy life is there for us to read like an open book. There is no question for which an answer is not available and no doubt which cannot be removed. If you wanted to know, you could be told how the Holy Prophet combed his hair, applied antimony to his eyes, the shape of his shoes; what his perspiration was like and similar details properly compiled. It was the Holy Prophet's distinguishing eminence that made Bosworth Smith say :

“In the matter of the biography of Mohammad [peace be upon him] no man can deceive himself or deceive others, for here there is broad daylight.”

But we do not depend on biographies alone. If God forbid they were not available, the Quran itself sheds such extensive light on the Prophet's life that one could compile his biography from the material furnished by the Holy Book.

When the Mother of Muslims, Ayesha, was asked about the Holy Prophet's life, she said : “The Quran is the image of his conduct.” His life was a model for all : monarchs, generals and judges, fathers and sons, traders, teachers and saints, the rich, the poor and the mendicants, in fact for everyone, whatever his profession. His guidance was best reflected in the

conduct of his Companions. Among these were commanders, generals, administrators, statesmen, saints, ascetics, beggars, mendicants and persons who reposed complete trust in God. Among them also were traders, teachers and scholars and the best specimen of humanity in every walk of life.

“If there is so much glow and brilliance in the Sun’s rays,

How much more brilliant is the Sun?”

OBEDIENCE TO THE PROPHET

PROPHETS did not come to this dark world merely to communicate the word of God. The Quran provides evidence that one of their important purposes was to make people obey and follow them and, through such obedience, attain the pleasure of God. The Quran says: "The Prophets We commissioned were ordained so that people may obey them and that is the will of God." The same point is elaborated in another way:

"Whosoever obeys the Prophet, obeys God."

The nature of obedience has been explained. It must be sincere, submissive, satisfying and resigned. If the mind falters in obedience to the Prophet, it will amount to loss of faith in God. In Sura Nisa it is said:

"Verily, we say on oath of your God that such persons will not be deemed to be men of faith unless they make you the judge with regard to all disputes and feel no hesitation in implementing the judgment that you give and in their complete surrender."

Obedience is not confined to important matters but extends to small ones also. For instance, to

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depart with or without permission is a trifling matter, but during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet it was laid down that if anyone left a meeting called for collective community purpose without taking the Holy Prophet's permission, it would be a breach of faith.

The Quran says:

“Verily they are the men of Faith who believe in God and His Prophet from their very heart and who, when on any occasion they are with the Prophet for collective community purpose, they should not withdraw except with the permission of the Prophet. Those among you who seek such permission alone are the believers of God and the Prophet.”

The Holy Prophet explained as to who would be admitted to Paradise, and who denied admission. He said only such people would be admitted as obeyed him. Said he:

“All who follow me shall be admitted to Paradise, but not those who deny me.”

He was asked: “Who are those who deny you?” He said: “He who obeys me will certainly be admitted to Paradise and he who disobeys me is the one who denies me.”

The matter does not rest there. Those who obey the Prophet are given the good news of admission to Paradise but those who acknowledge him as a Pro-

phet but disobey him are held as deniers of Prophethood. This means that belief in the Prophet is not a belief of the type in which we acknowledge a historic personality or a truth, but one requiring complete obedience as a basic imperative. The Quran has declared:

“Tell these people that if in fact they love God, then they should follow you. In that case God will have affection for them and will overlook their failings.”

Worship of God is most desirable and is the motivation of creation. But if worship is performed in a way contrary to the manner prescribed by the Holy Prophet it is undesirable. A well-known anecdote tells us: “Three Companions waited on the Mother of Muslims, Ayesha, and asked her about the way the Prophet worshipped. When they were told about it they felt their own devotions were not up to the mark and said: “He is so pure and there can be no comparison between us and him.” One of them said: “Henceforward, I will pray throughout the night.” The second said: “I will always keep fast.” The third man said: “I will never marry.” While the conversation was going on, the Holy Prophet appeared and addressing them said: “You were saying such things. Now listen to me. Of you all I am the person who fears God most and am the most pious, yet I will fast on certain days and not fast on

other days. During night I will pray as well as sleep and I will marry as well. He who deviates from my way will not be of me.”

The conversation shows the great importance attached to obedience to the Prophet in the religious law of Islam. In the above case expression was given to fervour for prayer and to love for God. Pledges of austerity and saintliness were taken, but supererogatory exercises were held as undesirable as they were not in accordance with what the Holy Prophet desires. Real worship is obeying and following the Prophet and thereby attaining piety and proximity to God. Another instance illustrates the fundamental truth about worship and prayer. Jabir relates that during the month of Ramazan the Holy Prophet went on a journey. He was fasting as were the people with him. When they reached Karagh-ul-Ghamim, the Prophet called for a cup of water. He lifted it high in his hand so that other people could see. He then broke his fast. After doing so he was told some people still were fasting. Thereupon the Holy Prophet exclaimed : “These are the people who are disobedient.” The episode clearly shows that prayer is, in fact, another name for implicit obedience to the Prophet. If one fasted as he did it was an act of prayer ; if the fast was broken, as he broke it, it was again an act. of prayer. But if the Holy Prophet had broken his fast and someone had

continued fasting till the evening, there would apparently be nothing wrong with it; on the contrary, such a man would probably be rewarded. But Islam does not tolerate deviation and has unequivocally declared such an attitude as not devotion or piety but disobedience of God. The poet Iqbal has said:

“Try and follow the Holy Prophet for that is religion.

If you cannot reach him, everything else is a joke.”

In further search of examples let us look at the lives of the Companions. By the injunction of the Quran: “Obey God and obey His Prophet,” the first generation of Muslims understood that they should mould their conduct on the pattern of the Holy Prophet, do what he wanted them and not do what he wanted them not to. Their conduct exemplified “Whatever the Prophet of God gives you, take it, and whatever he forbids, resist it.” These men, fully tutored in religion, were not content with merely obeying the Prophet; their life aim was to follow the Prophet in every detail.

Ammara relates that he heard Bishr bin Marwan deliver the sermon from the pulpit and raise both his hands. Realising what Bishr had done, Ammara exclaimed: “May God destroy both his hands.” He said this because he had seen the Holy Prophet raise his forefinger only when delivering the sermon. Ap-

parently it was a small matter if one raised both hands or one's forefinger while preaching from the pulpit but a Companion had seen the Holy Prophet act in a particular way and he could not approve of anybody acting otherwise. This attitude was not confined to Ammara; even the rightly-guided Caliphs felt much concerned when in their likes and dislikes there was any deviation from the ways of the Prophet. Imam Shirani relates an event during the Caliphate of Umar the Great. Umar was informed that some clothes had been dyed with the colour known as "Baul-i-Ijaz". This colour was derived from leaves. He prohibited the wearing of clothes of this colour. The reason was that in Arabic, "Baul-i-Ijaz" means the urine of a she-camel. But when Umar learnt from the other Companions that the Holy Prophet had himself worn clothes dyed with the same colour, he withdrew his order and repented several times.

About eating and drinking, Islamic religious law merely lays down what is lawful and unlawful and, subject to these limitations, one is free to indulge one's choice. Not so the Companions. Their absolute obedience to the Holy Prophet prompted them to develop the Prophet's own tastes for certain dishes. Anas says a Companion invited the Prophet to dinner and he (Anas) accompanied the Prophet. The host offered barley bread and soup containing pieces of

pumpkin. Anas saw the Prophet search assiduously for pieces of pumpkin in the soup. From then on Anas himself developed a taste for pumpkin and put it in as many dishes as possible. One may relish a pumpkin or not, but one can see the extent to which Anas went in his zeal to follow the Prophet. The Companions, in fact, were unanimous in absolute obedience to the Prophet.

LOVE FOR THE HOLY PROPHET

AS love for the Holy Prophet inevitably implies obedience to him and without obedience love for him cannot be effective, obedience to and love for the Prophet are inseparable. That is why those well versed in Islamic religious law have held both "love without obedience" and "obedience without love" to be heresy. A person professing love for the Holy Prophet and not following his injunctions could not be true to him. Love requires that it should respect every desire of the beloved.

"What is love? It is, becoming the beloved's slave;

To give the heart to someone else, and to wonder thereat."

On the other hand, obedience without love is like taking the kernel out from the shell and making it useless. Men of knowledge and vision who regard love without obedience as insincerity are correct. Sometimes external pressures force obedience, but this is not love. As soon as the pressures disappear, rebelliousness follows. This is why Islam preaches simultaneous obedience to and love for the Prophet. The Holy Prophet said himself:

“No one from among you can be a man of faith until he comes to hold me dearer than his son, his father and all other persons.”

Love for one's son and father are natural instincts, but the love for the Prophet is dictated by reason and intuition. Shah Wali Ullah Dehlvi has said perfection of faith lies in reason prevailing over instinct. And reason dominates instinct when it combines with sentiment and becomes the bone and blood of a human being. That is why Islam does not demand apparent devotion; it requires also sentimental attachment to the Holy Prophet.

Sahih Bukhari has a reference to a tradition related by Abdullah bin Hisham:

“We were with the Holy Prophet. He was holding in his hand the hand of Umar. Umar said, ‘Prophet of God, you are dearer to me above all things barring my life.’ Thereupon the Holy Prophet said, ‘I declare on oath in the name of God in Whose hands lies my life that till I am dearer to you than your life you will not be a man of faith.’”

Heeding this loving warning Umar at once declared: “Now you are dearer to me than my life.”

In fact, Umar's love became so intense that after the Holy Prophet's death, whenever Umar recalled the Prophet, he would weep and lose consciousness.

When his son Abdullah addressed a complaint to Umar saying: "Father, my emoluments are lower than those of Usama; although I am not inferior to him in any way." Umar replied, "Son, to the Holy Prophet, Usama's father (Zaid) was dearer than your father and Usama himself was dearer to him than you." Love requires one to love everything the beloved loves.

The Holy Prophet referring to members of his family asked: "O God, I love them. Love them yourself too, and those who love them, love them too." At another place he said: "Love Arabia because I am an Arabian and if you dislike Arabia you will begin to dislike me too."

Those who project Islam as stoic and do not regard love for the Holy Prophet as essential to faith should study the lives of the Companions. Therein are unique examples of love and attachment. Take the battle of Uhud. The Mother of Muslims, Ayesha, heard a wounded man crying with pain. She came closer to him and offered him water. He was gasping for breath and Ayesha heard him say: "May the blessings of God be upon the Holy Prophet of Islam, I wish somebody could carry my message to him, that his slave Ziyad is leaving the world." Ayesha went to the Holy Prophet and conveyed the message. Moved, the Holy Prophet came to Ziyad and said: "Ziyad, open your eyes.

See, I have come." Tears began to roll down Ziyad's eyes. The Holy Prophet asked, "Ziyad, have you a last wish?" And Ziyad said: "Holy Prophet, I have a wish," and crawling he placed his head at the feet of the Holy Prophet. His lips moved slowly: "I am satisfied with God as God, with Islam as my religion and with Mohammad as the Prophet."

Traditions reveal that sometimes a person, not perfect in obedience, sins, but as he loves God and His Prophet, he is not expelled from Islam and Islam treats him kindly. Umar narrates that in the Holy Prophet's time there was a man called Abdullah. His alias was Hammar and the Prophet often found his wit amusing. Once Hammar was whipped for being drunk. Another day he was again charged with the same offence. The Holy Prophet had him whipped again. When the punishment was over, a person said: "O God, this man is charged with drinking wine over and over again. May he be cursed." The Holy Prophet retorted: "Do not curse him. By God I know that he loves God and His Prophet."

The episode proves that Islam does not merely enjoin obedience but insists that Muslims love the Holy Prophet. It expects (as with Abu Bakr Siddiq) that the mere mention of the Prophet's name should send the heart a-throbbing and the eyes a-weeping. Rigorously austere persons who have not yet attained spiritual proximity to the Holy Prophet would

do well, instead of interpreting events, to try and get near him.

“Thou knowest not the taste of wine (of the Holy Prophet’s love),
Until thou hast sampled it.”

SUNNATS (TRADITIONS) OF THE HOLY PROPHET

SEVERAL injunctions of the Holy Quran give only summary directions without elaboration. Even fundamental matters like prayers, fasting, pilgrimage and Zakat are summarily touched upon in the Holy Book. No details are provided about the number of prostrations in prayers, the mode of offering them, the manner of assessing Zakat, the manner of fasting and the performance of pilgrimage. Guidance, instead, is found in the Commandments of the Holy Prophet. That is why the Quran enjoins the Muslims to follow the Holy Prophet in all his directions, to be able to act on Quranic teachings. God says:

“Tell them, O Prophet, if they love God, they should follow you. God will then love them.”

Among the Prophet's official functions was the exposition and elaboration of the Quran. It is said:

“We have revealed these words to you so that you may explain them to the people for whom they are meant.”

If one tried to understand the Quran without the Prophet's exposition it would be like expecting

a child to read books without a teacher.

The eminent scholar, Imam Abu Hanifah, has said :

“If there had been no Tradition of the Holy Prophet, none of us would have understood the Quran.”

If God forbid, the Quran was a poetic composition, it might have been possible for the Prophet to leave it to its readers' varied interpretation. But the Quran emphasises elimination of all differences and holding fast to God. We cannot, by overlooking and disregarding the interpretation made by the Holy Prophet through his words and deeds, start giving our own meaning to them, “my dream was dissolved by the variety of its interpretations”. Why all Muslims are unanimous on some matters is because an attempt has been made to understand Islam and the Quran through the Holy Prophet's Traditions. If Muslims had ignored them from the start there would have remained hardly any commonness between them. It is because of these Traditions that when we talk of prayers, Zakat, fasting, pilgrimage and other Islamic injunctions, a clear image of our unity emerges in our minds.

Even otherwise, it is a characteristic of human nature that loving somebody leaves an indelible imprint about the person, his actions and expressions, on the mind. Talk to a person who had met

Allama Iqbal or Quaid-i-Azam and you will find him reminiscing about them, the way they talked and dressed, their general bearing and indeed all the details about them he can remember. When newspapers and journals bring out commemorative issues of these men, special emphasis is laid on their thoughts and actions and the reader regards such personal anecdotes as instructive. Why do we not forget these great men? Because their greatness is impressed on our minds and we honour every detail of their lives. The same is true of those who love. To them, every mood of the beloved is unforgettable.

“Howsoever much I try to forget,
The memory of the beloved holds.”

The relationship between the Holy Prophet and his Companions is worth studying. The greatness of the personality who enjoys the status, “To sum up, after God you are the greatest being,” is limitless. Usama bin Sharik relates another example of absolute devotion:

“I appeared in the presence of the Holy Prophet, and saw his Companions sitting around him motionless and tongue-tied as if some bird were moving round over their heads.”

Anas relates:

“I saw the barber giving the Holy Prophet a haircut. The Prophet’s Companions sat surround-

ing him for the purpose of gathering his hair.”

When God prohibited anyone from speaking aloud in the Prophet's presence, one of the Companions, Sabit bin Qais, started remaining in his house and stopped visiting the Prophet. The Holy Prophet deputed Saad bin Muaz to make enquiries about Sabit. When Saad called on Sabit and gave him the Prophet's message, Sabit said:

“Speaking in a loud voice has been prohibited. You know that among you all, the Prophet's Companions, my voice is the loudest: I have withdrawn because of the fear my voice might invite upon me the fire of Hell.”

Such was the impression of the greatness of the greatest of men in the minds of the Companions. Nothing like it exists in the annals of history.

Urwa bin Masud was not yet a Muslim when at the truce of Hudaibiya he came as a delegate of the Quraish. When he returned to the Quraish he carried back with him the story of the Companions' devotion to the Prophet.

“O people, I say it on oath. I have had the occasion to visit the courts of Caesar, Chroesis and Negus, but I have not seen any monarch respected so much by his people as Mohammad by his Companions. I say it on oath that when he spits, his spit is not allowed to fall on the ground, but is collected by the Companions, and whoever col-

jects it rubs it on his face and body. Whenever Mohammad asks them to do something, there is a rush by the Companions to comply. When Mohammad speaks, their voices are lowered. From respect for Mohammad they do not lift their eyes to see him.”

Abdullah bin Zaid who used to give the call to prayer was working in his garden when told of the Prophet's death. Immediately he raised his hands and said: “My God make me blind so that after the death of the Holy Prophet I may not see anyone with these eyes.”

These are but a few instances of the bonds between the Holy Prophet and his Companions. Those seeking details may study books about the Prophet's Traditions and his biographies. They will find how dear, great and eminent he was to his Companions. Could such devoted Companions who saw their beloved leader at close quarters, and heard his Commandments from his lips, forget him or about him? Sense and reason would say, no.

The Holy Prophet himself had insisted:

“Keep these things in view, and the people who come after you, inform them.”

In the plain of Mana addressing one hundred thousand Companions the Holy Prophet said:

“May God prosper the man who listened to me and remembered what I said, and then conveyed

it to those who had not listened.”

When to emotional love for the Holy Prophet was added the exhortation of this great and beloved personality, the propagation of his Traditions received further impetus at the hands of his Companions. Naturally, the desire to know more Traditions increased. Abdullah bin Abbas says:

“In the search for Traditions I would go to every person about whom I was told he had heard something from the Holy Prophet. When I called on somebody at noon and found he was resting I would lie down outside his door. The winds blew the dust on my face but I would tarry on regardless, until the householder came out of his own. Seeing me he would say: ‘O cousin of the Prophet, how have you come?’ I would say: ‘I have been told you narrate a Tradition of the Holy Prophet and I wanted to hear it from you.’ In reply he would say: ‘You could have sent somebody for this, or I could have come over myself,’ at which I would say: ‘It behoves me to come to you personally.’”

COMPILATION OF TRADITIONS

NO PEOPLE whose origin dates back a thousand years can claim with certainty the compilation of their religious traditions as conforming to the standards of modern day history-writing. It is my claim that none but the Muslims enjoy this privilege. In truth, the collection of traditions and the writing of history originated with Muslim historians and traditionists. Before the advent of Islam no other people had ever adopted the truthful way of history-writing associated with the historians and traditionists of Arabia. They worked with unique and unparalleled industry and enthusiasm. Not one religious community has, during the lifetime of its prophet, given any importance to his life and ways. In spite of their greatness, no attention was paid to the ways and sayings of Buddha, Moses and Jesus until years after they were gone. The followers of Buddha did not make an attempt to write an account of his life during his lifetime. The companions of Moses made no such attempt about him. Those of Jesus, no more than twelve in number, are not known to have recorded any account pertaining to his life.

Against this is written evidence that many of the

Holy Prophet's Companions kept a record of everything he said or did. These records were passed down from generation to generation. The number of Companions who recorded personal experience runs into thousands, and from them this precious heritage has passed down to millions.

Historically speaking, the Holy Prophet was the first Prophet in the world during whose lifetime the number of his followers was counted in tens of thousands and they were privileged to hear the Prophet's Message from his own lips.

Historian al-Qastallani claims that when the Holy Prophet performed the last pilgrimage, about two hundred thousand Muslims performed it with him and heard in the plain of Arafat the Sermon preserved in history as the Sermon of the Prophet's Farewell Pilgrimage. They were, therefore, eye witnesses of the scene. Undoubtedly, these hundreds of thousands must have transmitted to their children and tribes the whole account of the pilgrimage. So, when the Holy Prophet passed away there were already millions who had first-hand knowledge of the habits and manners of the Prophet and the basic things about Islam.

Historian Abdul Hakim and other historians of the first generation of Islam claim that when the Holy Prophet expired, the majority of his Companions formed a group of missionaries devoted exclusively to the dissemination of his teachings. Every Companion's

residence became a school teaching the Prophet's Traditions and thousands of Muslims ardently sat at the feet of the Companions to hear them. I have no camera photographing back in time the scenes of thousands of scholars presenting themselves before each Companion. They carried with them pens, ink and sheets of paper, noting down all that their teachers related. In the succeeding generation of Muslims this interest gathered momentum.

History recounts an occasion when a king's procession was ignored and deserted as soon as someone shouted that a Companion or Traditionist was near by. The crowd would then run to hear him speak. Historian al-Tabari relates that the Abbasid Caliph Harun-ur-Rashid was encamping somewhere and thousands of people were around him when the crier gave the call that Abdullah bin Mubarak had arrived. Hearing this the king's entire camp thinned out. Only a few courtiers remaining, the rest had run to Abdullah bin Mubarak. Harun-ur-Rashid was greatly upset. He stood up and saw a sea of humanity crowding round Abdullah's steed. Harun-ur-Rashid exclaimed with bitterness: "It appears that he is the real king." He was wrong. Abdullah was not the real king. The real king was he whose Traditions Abdullah was recounting. The Traditions of this noble and pure soul prompted millions of people of Arabia, Iraq, Iran, Syria, Egypt and Africa to

traverse hundreds of miles in search of the Traditionists in order to hear them.

While the compilation of Traditions began in the second half of the first century of Hegira, work on them commenced in an organised manner during the time of Umar bin Abdul Aziz.

Historian Abdul Hakim says Umar bin Abdul Aziz first ordered their official compilation and the foremost traditionists of Medina were instructed to prepare a special collection. The distinction lay with Imam Malik for compiling an unquestionable compendium of Traditions, which under the title of *Muwatta Imam Malik*, adorns every Islamic library to this day. Those subscribing to his school of thought claim he heard them recounted by tens of thousands of persons and when through Yahya, the pupil of Imam Malik, this collection reached Spain, the number of persons who read or heard it ran into millions.

Other traditionists of Medina during the same age, besides Imam Malik, also compiled collections. From among these the names of Ibn'Hisham, Ibn Ishaq, and Ibn Saad top the list. Like the *Muwatta* of Imam Malik the collection of Traditions compiled by these authors are available in all Islamic libraries. During the Abbasid period, the compilation of Traditions after the Quran was so dear to the people that thousands of scholars compiled them, their works receiving

wide publicity. Other famous compilers were Ibn Juraij, Rabi b. Subaih, Said bin Abi Aruba, Hammad bin Salama, Imam Sufyan Thauri, Imam Auzai, Imam Haisama, Mamar, Jarir bin Abdul Hamid, Abdullah bin Mubarak, Ubaidullah bin Musa, Musaddad Basri, Asad bin Musa, Naim bin Hammad, Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal, Imam Ishaq bin Rahwaih and Usman bin Abi Shaiba.

According to Ibn-ul-Nadim, the title of the collection of Imam Sufyan Thauri was *al-Jami-ul-Kabir* and *al-Jami-ul-Saghir*. The traditionist Abu Abdur Rahman compiled the book *al-Sunan*, Ibn Abi al-Zinad wrote *al-Faraiz*, Abdul Malik *al-Maghazi*, and Waki the book *al-Sunan*. Ibn Abi Aruba, al-Walid bin Muslim, Imam Abdur Razzaq, Imam Makhul, al-Maruzi, Ahmad bin Mohammad Hani, Ali bin Madini, al-Mamari, Ibn Abi Haisama, Muslim bin Hajjaj, Yahya bin Muin, Ibrahim al-Harabi, Ibn Ayyub, Abu Muslim, Ibn Abi Dawud, Jafar al-Daqqaq, Muhammad bin Mukhallad, Abu Abdullahal-Husain, were all collectors of Traditions. They collected them on their own and published them as books.

Imam al-Zahabi, Ibn-ul-Jauzi and al-Subki say the number of traditionists who compiled collections and undertook research in this behalf ran into hundreds. Of these, universally famous were Imam Malik, Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal, Imam Bukhari,

Imam Muslim, Imam Tirmizi, Imam Nasai, Imam Abu Dawud, Ibn Maja, Daraqutni, al-Baihaqi, al-Tahawi and al-Hakim. All these collections have won public approval and will be found in every library and Islamic institution.

(1) *Continuity from generation to generation.* These Traditions were communicated by the Companions to the next generation and by it without variation to the third generation and so on. The Quran has reached us through a similar chain.

(2) *Continuity of action.* Some practices have continued since the dawn of Islam without a break. Illustrations are five daily prayers, the call to prayers and the number of prostrations in the prayers.

(3) *Chain of authorities.* Sometimes a Tradition is supported by a number of authorities. The one, "Your deeds are to be judged in the light of your intention," has been related by seven hundred different persons. The Tradition about the finality of Prophethood has been narrated by five hundred Companions.

(4) *Continuity of common versions.* In the Traditions relating to miracles every event is unique but in all Traditions the common factor is that all miracles are traceable to the Holy Prophet. Even among the non-continuous Traditions there are several narrated by eight to ten persons. The traditionists (God grant them Paradise) have taken great pains

to elaborate the Traditions. For the preservation of Traditions the traditionists have formulated fifty-two disciplines. There cannot be the slightest doubt about their veracity.

I shall now refer to some of the basic disciplines.

(1) *Technical terms of the Hadith*. This deals with the basic technical terms used in Hadith.

(2) *Criticism and judgment of Hadith*. Eminent traditionists have subjected the narrators to criticism and have discussed their character, words and deeds, no narrator escaping analysis. The well-known books are *Taujih-ul-Nazar* and *Qawaid-ul-Hadith*.

(3) *The narrators of Hadith*. This is the greatest discipline about Hadith. The traditionists worked very hard and as a result of a lifetime of labour produced works extending over several volumes. Traditionist Ibn Saad was the founder of this discipline and his book *Tabaqat Ilm Asma-ur-Rijal* is the first standard publication on the subject. Ibn Saad was a contemporary of Imam Malik and of the historians Ibn Ishaq, al-Waqidi and Ibn Hisham. In rank he is next to Imam Malik. His book *Tabaqat Ibn Saad* adorns every Islamic library. In this compilation of several volumes are biographical sketches of all the narrators of Hadith from among the Companions and the two succeeding generations. After Ibn Saad in the Abbasid period and in the subsequent periods the subject was of great interest to the

scholars of Traditions. Nevertheless, the book that broke all popular records included : Imam Bukhari's *al-Tarikh-ul-Kabir*, Imam Ibn Hijr's *Lisan-ul-Mizan*, Imam al-Zahabi's books *Tazkarat-ul Huffaz*, *Tabaqat-ul-Mashahir* and *Mizan-ul-Itidal*, Ibn Qutaiba's *al-Maarif*, Ibn-ul-Jauzi's *al-Muntazim*, al-Nawawi's *Tahzib-ul-Asma*, al-Khatib's "History of Baghdad," Ibn Abdul Barr's *al-Istiab*, and al-Sabki's *Tabaqat-ul-Shafiya*.

(4) *Subject-matter and character of Traditions.* Under this discipline various traditions have been classified subject-wise. Imam Suyuti has classified the Traditions in two volumes. Relevant and famous are the books of Mulla Ali Qari and Allama Tahir Fatanni.

(5) *Genuineness of Traditions.* By this discipline we can sift the genuine from the spurious Traditions.

(6) *Coordination of Traditions.* This discipline coordinates the Traditions and reconciles those that appear to be conflicting and inconsistent. Famous studies are *Tawil Mukhtalif-ul-Hadith* by Ibn Qutaiba, and *Ikhtilaf-ul-Hadith* by Imam Shafi'i.

(7) *Genealogy of the narrators of Traditions* : treats with the narrators' genealogy. Most well-known book is *Ansab-ul-Rijal-ul-Hadith*.

(8) *The Companions* : discusses the names of the Companions. Imam Bukhari's *al-Tarikh-ul-Kabir* and Ibn Abdul Barr Maliki's *al-Istiab* are standard books

on the subject.

(9) *The narrators and compilers.* In many cases the narrators have similar names, such as Husain and Huṣain. These names have been gathered and separate accounts given of each. A compilation by Ibn Hajr is the standard work on the subject.

(10) *Difficult words.* Traditions which are difficult of interpretation or are in apparent conflict with the Quran have been explained. Standard work: Imam Tahawi's *Mushkil-ul-Asar*.

(11) *Jurisprudence of Traditions:* deals with the legal aspect of matters arising out of Traditions. Well-known books on the subject include *Alam-ul-Muwaqqi'in* by Ibn Qayyim, and *Hujjatullah-ul-Baligha* by Shah Wali Ullah Dehalvi.

(12) *Indexing of Traditions.* If you know only a part of a Tradition and are interested in knowing its full contents and authority, indexes prepared by the Traditionists are available. In the sixth century A.H. Hafiz Ali Ibn Asakir wrote book on the subject, bearing the title *al-Ashraf ala Marifat-ul-Atraf*. A book by Suyuti is also well known. The Orientalists have also compiled a book published in Egypt under the title of *Miftah-ul-Sunnah*.

(13) *The Traditionists:* treats with the Traditionists with particular reference to the dates of their deaths.

(14) *The Sunnah:* discusses the place of the Sunnah

in religion. Standard works include *Miftah-ul-Jannat* by Imam Suyuti, *Kitab-ul-Risala* and *Kitab-ul-Umm* (7th volume) by Imam Shafi'i, *al-Muwafaqat* (2nd volume) by Imam Ibn Qayyim.

These are some of the examples of the labours of eminent traditionists. It can be said without fear of contradiction that no community in the world to this time has been able to preserve an account of the life of its Prophet or of any leader in such detail as the 'Companions and their followers did of the Prophet of Islam. The Holy Prophet has passed away but his Traditions live on, documented and preserved to secure the blessings of his vision for humanity.

Allama Iqbal has aptly said :

“The meaning of the Vision of the last of the Prophets is,

That you should follow in every way his commandments;

In the world live like the Holy Prophet,

So that he is the end-all and be-all of your existence.

Then look at yourself, and that is his Vision,
His Traditions are the key to the wealth of his knowledge.”

FINALITY OF PROPHETHOOD

A STUDY of the Holy Prophet of Islam would be incomplete without appreciating that he was the last of the Prophets and there will be no other prophet after him. This basic belief has welded into one fraternity all who have faith in God and His Messenger by removing every racial and material distinction between them. The belief proclaims that whatever guidance and instruction were needed from God by mankind have been received; creeds and deeds which led to heresy have been indicated and attributes by which men of faith can be recognised have been expounded. It is no longer necessary to have faith in any other teaching, nor does Islam or heresy depend on individual acknowledgment. Anyone not acknowledging the finality of Prophethood of the Holy Prophet of Islam wants to strike at the roots of Islam's solidarity, create disunity and dissension in its ranks and is out to destroy the very basis on which the concept of universal Islamic brotherhood is founded.

The importance of the doctrine of the finality of Prophethood has a high place in our religion. If a man has faith in the Holy Prophet but he does not

believe he was the last of the Prophets, such a man's place in Islamic society and before God and his faith in Islam is of little value. More than fourteen centuries have passed since the Holy Prophet was commissioned, but in every age Muslims have regarded the doctrine of Finality as their faith's mainstay. So strict were our predecessors in this matter that when during the time of Imam Abu Hanifa a person claimed prophethood, the Imam ordained as heretic not only a believer in the false one but also the man who asked the false one for proof in support of his claim. If Islam had not been perfect and was not able to cater to the requirements of a developing world society, there may have been need for another prophet. But God Himself perfected the Holy Prophet and the religion. "Today, I have perfected your religion." He had thus spoken out unequivocally. And that was the end of the matter. The Holy Prophet himself explained his Finality thus:

"My example and that of the preceding Prophets is of a palace where a vacant place had been left for a brick. Those who see it would wonder why space for a brick had been left vacant. I am that brick."

The Holy Prophet was most kind to his community, kinder, in fact, than a parent. Because of this he did not leave anything vague about prophet-

hood, explaining everything in clear terms, identifying the impending dangers and indicating the signs leading to the Day of Resurrection. He threw light on every matter with which his community was to be concerned in the course of time. So concerned was he to fulfil the requirements of his high office that the Holy Prophet was not satisfied until, on the occasion of the Farewell Pilgrimage, he got an acknowledgment from his followers:

“Yes, you have communicated the message of God, and have discharged this responsibility.”

If the Sacred Being Who had enlightened His people on all aspects of the present, past and future, was to send down another prophet, He would certainly have indicated his coming. Those, therefore, who consider the possibility of a continuing process of prophethood, in fact insinuate that the Holy Prophet had not performed his obligations, a charge no Muslim in his senses could accept.

The Quran carries at least one hundred verses referring directly or indirectly to the Finality of Prophethood. The Traditions also provide more than a hundred sources in support. If, these irrefutable proofs notwithstanding, someone with ridiculous and vague arguments denies the doctrine of Finality he clearly wants to create divisiveness in the community in order to strengthen the hands of Islam's enemies. The Bible has said:

“Beware of the false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are revenging wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grape of thorns, or figs of thistles?” (Mathews, 7, 15-16).

There are many implications of the doctrine of the Finality. Every Muslim should, however, absorb one or two matters about its philosophy and message. It is evident that the community owing allegiance to the Last of the Prophets, and whose prophethood is eternal, must, because of it, enjoy a position of leadership till the Day of Resurrection. If the Prophet was the last of the Prophets, his community must be the last of the religious communities, and will show the right path to all others. In his poem *Rumuz-i-Bekhudī* Allama Iqbal has expressed himself on the doctrine of Finality in the following terms:

Thus God finalised the religious law with us;
With our Prophet the process of prophethood
was ended;

Now the lustre of the times is because of us,
Our Prophet is the last of the Prophets and we
the last of the communities.

The duty of the cup-bearer has been entrusted
to us,

We carry the last of the cups;

It is God’s favour that there will be no Prophet
after ours,

This favour of the Finality of Prophethood protects the honour and integrity of the religion of Mohammad,

This is the source of the strength to the community,

And this the secret of the community's unity;

God has rejected every other claim.

Islam alone is to be sustained till eternity.

Because of this doctrine a Muslim severs

The heart from all but God,

And proclaims, no other after the Muslims shall come a community.

Chapter III

THE HEREAFTER

*Since the day thou camest into being,
Thou hast been fire, dust, or air.
If, thus, perpetuity was to be thine,
Wouldst thou this progress attain?
In place of the present existence
Thou mayest another one expect.
This eternity thou hast through death attained,
Why then from death thou turnest the face?
—Maulana Rumi*

BELIEF IN THE HEREAFTER

WITH faith in one God and all His qualities, it becomes clear that He is not blind or deaf, but possesses the highest attributes. He is at once as fair, wise, masterful and merciful as He is kind, powerful and omnipotent. These and all His attributes are demonstrably visible in every nook and corner of the universe. Considered carefully, the doctrine of the life hereafter will appear as a self-evident and logical sequence of these attributes.

If God is just, reason would dictate that He reward the Believers and punish the disobedient and the disbelievers; that each should get his due for what he says or does; that the righteous ones should succeed and the bad ones fail. But what is actually happening? Those who do not understand anything by the name of God are rolling in luxury. They play with wealth and commute in plush motor cars and aeroplanes. On the other hand, those who believe in Him and spend their lives carrying out His injunctions are usually poor and in economic difficulties. If the world were to end right now, God's attribute of justice will have

no meaning.

God is all-knowing and none of His acts lacks wisdom. But supposing the world were suddenly to dissolve, life's workshop to disintegrate without achieving any purpose and human character to unceremoniously disappear from the world stage, who would believe God to be wise and all-knowing? Reason and wisdom demand that the world should not come to an end in a purposeless way, but by wisdom.

We concede that God is the fountain of boundless mercy and kindness. It cannot, therefore, be inferred that the world's underdogs will not be compensated by Him with kindness and their grievances not redressed. There were thousands like them who were made to lie on burning charcoal, expelled from their homes or hacked to death for uttering His name. He will certainly compensate them for suffering for His sake and will make them happy with the pleasures of eternal life. If this were not so, His quality of mercy would be open to question. No one believing in the Unity of God could ever accept such a blasphemy.

The doctrine of Unity postulates that God is the ruler of all rulers and His sovereignty and supremacy is established over all. How, then, can it be thought that there will be no court of this real Sovereign and the guilty and the rebels will not be punished?

When we cannot envisage this for the world of ordinary, petty rulers, how can we believe otherwise of the greatest Sovereign?

Considering God's great attributes one's mind attests that there must be another world where the iniquities of this one would be corrected and God's qualities vindicated. This is the conclusion of unerring reason. The well-known statesman and wise leader of the Quraish, Amr bin al-As, irritated at being invited to embrace Islam, migrated to Abyssinia. It is said a young man of the Quraish came to him and said: 'O Abu Abdullah, people feel that you are inclined towards Mohammad (peace be on him).' Amr asked the young man to meet him at an appointed time and place. When the two met Ibn al-As said to the youth: "I ask you on oath whether we are in the right, or the Iranians and the Byzantines." The young man replied unhesitatingly: "We." Amr bin al-As then softly enquired: "What, then, is the use of righteousness when materially they are more advanced than us? My mind bears out that whatever Mohammad (peace be upon him) says about the hereafter is correct. Indeed, in the hereafter alone will righteousness be paid for with righteousness and evil with evil." It follows that if from the material point of view the result of righteousness is what we see in the world, no one will call God merciful. Amr bin al-As had

questioned his companion on oath, so that proof was furnished of the hereafter in the light of faith in God. Muslim scholars have regarded the doctrine of life hereafter as a corollary to that of the Unity of God. If there is faith in the latter, it would guide one to faith in the hereafter. But if doubts linger one can only commiserate with the ignorant.

The Holy Quran has held people who deny the hereafter as deniers of God. It says:

“And now if you are to wonder, the point for wonder is the view of the persons who say after death: We are converted to dust; how can we be resurrected?

Verily these are the people who deny their God.”
In the same verse it is also said:

“And these are the people around whose necks shall be chains. They are doomed to Hell and in Hell shall they remain.”

IMPORTANCE OF BELIEF IN THE HEREAFTER

IT can be said that existence or non-existence of life after death being supernatural matters it should not be the basis of Islam and faith, as are the doctrines of God's Unity and Prophethood. But by such denial faith and religion itself is endangered. Religion aims at making man righteous and obedient to God. The innate nature of man is the motivating force. But it is so weak that often his animal nature dominates it. Search for popularity, private gain and other temporary and ephemeral etceteras dominate over and tend to make a man go the wrong way. If he has no faith in the hereafter and believes no sovereign power will call him to account for what he makes of life on earth, he is likely to give himself up to license, take bribe, commit adultery and thrive on evil instead of treading the thorny path of righteousness. There are constant impediments in the way of a righteous man.

Obstacles, all the way up his alley,
Come! Return ere your life forfeit be.

One could say one's conscience was the best guide but did you ever think what is conscience? It is

not a stable or unchanging thing. It is possible that over a matter for which my conscience blames me, your conscience may remain unaffected. In the same way things objectionable to the conscience of a Hindu may not be offensive to the conscience of a Muslim. There is a world of difference between the conscience of one who believes in God and of an atheist. Why? Because conscience works within the framework of human doctrines, ideologies and particular ways of life. If conscience is like that, who can claim it to be enough for inspiring righteousness? In order, therefore, to improve ourselves and proceed along the ways of righteousness, we must have faith in the hereafter and develop the conviction that after death we shall be accountable for every moment of our life. Such a conviction alone will prevent overt and covert sins and, by training conscience along right lines, makes it truly representative of righteousness.

BASIC SOLUTION OF DOUBTS AND AMBIGUITIES

AS over the doctrine of God's Unity, intellect raises questions about the hereafter, but on what subject questions cannot be asked? It has already been discussed that, while Islamic doctrines cannot be held contrary to reason, so much can be said about them that these cannot be grasped by intellect. If, therefore, we deny the basic truths, who would be more foolish and ignorant than us? If a well-frog feels there is no world outside its well, who would agree with it? If a child in his mother's womb takes it to be the entire universe, who would believe him? He may well say that beyond the womb he cannot imagine another world Maulana Rumi criticising intellect-worship has well said :

“You who merely dwell in a noisy spring,
What do you know of rivers like the Oxus and
the Euphrates as well?

At another place, Rumi said :

“The insect that lives within a stone,
For it the stone is the sky and the earth.”

If the insect that resides within a stone considers the sky and the earth to be within the stone, it cannot

be blamed; the poor creature has reached the conclusion that what cannot be seen and is beyond intellect cannot be believed. What is your verdict? Would you believe intellect to be everything or would you give some recognition to conscience, intuition, universal signs and the evidence of Prophets? The Holy Quran says about those who do not believe in the hereafter :

“Not, that is not the fact. The truth is that that which they could not comprehend through their intelligence and the result whereof has not appeared, they are inclined to falsify.”

SCIENCE AND THE HEREAFTER

IT will be conceded that the modern age has demonstrated like never before the greatness of human intellect in developing Science. That is why cynics often quote the views of scientists, finding in them intellectual props to deny God and the hereafter. But the fact is that scientists and eminent Western thinkers acknowledge that such matters as the hereafter, revelation and allied realities are beyond the competence of Science. The matter does not rest there. Now Western scholars who deify intellect are openly coming round to the belief that one day the world will be completely destroyed. Undoubtedly, the invention of the nuclear bomb is a great development, but Bertrand Russell sees therein the ultimate destruction of the world. In the winter of 1948, in a radio broadcast from B.B.C. he said :

“If nuclear bombs are exploded in large numbers (and if the chain of great wars continues, it is evident that they will be used), some experts of physics hold (and their view commands respect) that the bombs would create radiation which when dissolved in air would destroy every form of life,

and after a few years our earth would be completely divested of human beings, animals and plants."

Bertrand Russell has gone a step further in his book *Religion and Science*:

"The laws which are the cause of progress may become the cause of disintegration as well. One day the sun will get cold and life would come to an end. The entire history of animal and plant life on earth is confined to the intervening period between very hot and very cold ages. Progressive evolution is no law but the pendulum of progress and decadence keeps moving and, undoubtedly, due to the disintegration of the universal forces there is a tendency for it to move downwards."

Some people may not believe in the limitations of Science at the instance of Lord Russell. Therefore, in his book *Religion and Science*, he has quoted several scholars in support of his view. Study these thoughts and say whether it would be in order to hold that science was opposed to the doctrine of the life hereafter?

Sir Arthur Thomson says:

"Science in its scientific capacity never asks 'Why'. It does not probe the purpose of creation. Science does not claim to be the starting point of reality or its foundation stone. In suprasensory feelings and spiritual matters, Science is helpless in applying itself."

Dr Minorski says :

“Revelation and intuition are experiences beyond the scope of Science.”

Sir Arthur Thomson further writes :

“Science cannot furnish the answer to ‘Why’. But religion can answer why the stars were created, the planets split up from the sun, the earth was created, or how, after all, life came into existence.”

Professor J.S. Haldane reached the conclusion :

“In our innate true practical concepts, truth, sacrifice, beauty, and in the principles of fraternity arising from such values, we can have a vision of God.”

After quoting these views, and numerous similar ones, Bertrand Russell, acknowledging the imitations of Science, has observed: “Science can do nothing about values and in respect of such matters as ‘Love is better than hatred,’ or ‘Mercy is superior to oppression,’ it can express no opinion.”

Presumably you may say that if Science does not deny doctrines about life hereafter or other supernatural matters, it does not recognise their possibility either. Read another quotation. The famous British scientist Mr Hoyle looked at the universe through the 200" diameter telescope at Mount Palomar. His observations were published in the *Morning News* of Dacca :

§ 4]



“In this universe everything is possible. If there is any such thing as spiritualism there is scope for it in the universe. And if paradise and hell are anything there is scope for them also in the universe.”

WHO LOSES ?

THOSE who do not believe in the hereafter speculate that the world would be destroyed one day and no sign of life left thereafter. We have used the word "speculate" to show that they cannot back up their views with any proof. They merely presume that no world will succeed the present one and a presumption is not necessarily correct. Even if those who do not believe in the hereafter, disregard Islamic injunctions and are not in after life called to account—as they think they won't be—is that a reason for them to commit excesses and irregularities in the mortal world and generally behave like libertines? But if their smug presumptions prove baseless, being against the view held by a great majority of people at all times, their mundane pleasures would invite severe punishment as ordained, and they will pay a heavy price for their waywardness. Men who have unshakable faith in what the Prophets said are above question, as their faith does not stand in need of argument. The argument is directed to the irrational beings who, even in matters beyond the competence of intellect, are keen to get its verdict. Why do they, despite the

dangers inherent in their presumptions, insist on speculation? Do we not, in order to ward off disease, submit ourselves to a strict regime? Is the warning of the Day of Resurrection of lesser danger than that of ill-health?

In advancing the argument we are about to make, let us not be misunderstood, God forbid, to be resorting to the devil's ways of doubting truth. Our object is to explain things to the intellectual world in terms it understands, of loss and gain—it being incapable of understanding anything through faith. Ali (may the mercy of God be upon him), while holding discourse with a heretic, said:

“If things are as you say (that there is no God), then I am saved and you are saved. And if things are as I say (that there is God), then I am saved and you are caught and will be punished for all time.”

In his book *Kimiya-i-Saadat*, Imam Ghazali has explained this point in detail:

“And this statement which the Caliph of the Muslims, Ali, made was not because he had any doubt about the existence of God, but because such approach was in accordance with the intellectual level of the heretic who could not understand an argument based on faith. This furnishes sufficient ground to realise that he who, instead of safeguarding his interests in the world to come,

gets involved in other things is foolish, his failure to ponder over the hereafter being due to the dominion over him of worldly temptations, which leave him no time for spiritual thinking. And he who believes in punishment in the hereafter, he whose faith in this is overwhelming or whose faith from the viewpoint of reason is weak, it behoves them all that they escape from this great danger and follow the way of care and caution."

SOME SCENES OF THE HEREAFTER IN THE QURAN

Attendance of the Guilty in the Court of God on the Day of Resurrection

“Make them fear that day when the earth and the sky shall be transformed and become something else; and all of them shall appear unveiled before the Almighty and Powerful God; that day you will see the guilty with their hands and feet chained. They will be wearing a dress of charcoal, and the flames of fire shall cover their faces” (Sura Ibrahim, Verses 48-50).

Witnesses will appear

“Today We shall put the seal on their mouths. And their hands will tell Us what they had been doing and their feet will give evidence of where they had moved about” (Sura Yasin).

“Their ears, their eyes, and their bodies would give evidence as to what they had been doing. They would ask their bodies as to why they had given evidence against them. They would answer that God Who has given the power of speech to all things has also endowed them with the power of speech”

Sura Ha-Mim).

Ransom will be of no avail

“For any person who has been guilty of oppression and tyranny and possesses the wealth of the entire world and is prepared to pay it as ransom for escaping from the punishment in the hereafter, such ransom shall be of no avail. When such people become aware of the punishment that awaits them, they shall in their hearts feel great regret. But they shall be judged on merit, and they shall not be the victims of any injustice” (Sura Yunus, Verse 55).

Dependence on wealth and friends

“O Prophet, tell My servants who have faith that they should establish prayer, and from whatever We have given them they should publicly and privately spend in the way of God, to prepare for the day when wealth shall be of no avail, and friends shall not be able to help friends” (Sura Ibrahim, Verse 31).

*Expressions of humility and innocence
on the part of leaders*

“And when all such people shall be uncovered before God, then from them such persons who were weak in the world shall say to those who had become great: ‘In the world we were under you; can you now do something to save us from the punishment of God?’ They would reply: ‘If God had shown us

a way to escape, we would have shown it to you too. But here all are equal. Howsoever we may lament to strive, there is no possibility for us being saved!" (Sura Ibrahim, Verse 21).

"And when the persons guilty of polytheism in the world see the things they made partners of God, they will say: 'O God, these are the things whom we made Thy partners and whom we used to invoke disregarding Thee. Thereupon the things whom they had worshipped would declare: 'You are false'" (Sura al-Nahl, Verse 86).

Regret of the followers

"When the leaders show indifference to their followers and both leaders and followers become aware of the chastisement of God, their mutual relationship would come to an end and the followers would say with regret that if they were to go to the world again, they would show their disregard of those who had disregarded them" (Sura al-Baqara, Verse 19).

Remorse of the Guilty

"Verily the Messenger of our God brought the truth. Then, will we now get someone who would make a recommendation in our favour? Or we might be sent to the world again so that, instead of following the previous erroneous ways, we may now follow the right one, and strictly comply with the Com-

mandments of God” (Sura al-Araf, Verse 6).

The End

“The persons who favoured the way of righteousness, for them there will be righteousness and further beneficence of God. Their faces would be immune to blackness and humiliation of evil. They are worthy of Paradise where they will live for ever. And the people who sinned shall reap as they had sown. They shall be humiliated and disgraced. There will be no one to save them from the punishment of God. Their faces shall be enveloped in darkness as if the curtain of night hung over them. They are fit for Hell, where they will remain for ever” (Sura Yunus, Verses 26-27).

SOME SCENES OF THE LIFE HEREAFTER IN THE HADITH

Three Groups. Abu Huraira has narrated that the Holy Prophet said that on the Day of Resurrection all the people will be raised in three different categories and groups. One will comprise of persons who would walk on foot ; persons in the second group would ride ; and those in the third group would walk on their faces. Abu Huraira asked : "Prophet of God, how shall these persons of the third group walk on their faces?" The Holy Prophet replied : "He who made them walk on foot has the power to make them walk on their faces." Let it be remembered that such people would escape from trials and tribulations of the world through their mouths (Tirmizi).

The lightest punishment of all. There is a narration by Numan bin Bashir. He says the Holy Prophet said that from among those in Hell, the one subject to the lightest punishment will be he whose shoes and their laces shall be of fire. With the heat of those shoes his brain shall boil, the way a kettle boils on a stove. He would not think any punishment could be severer than that, although his punishment would be the lightest compared to that of other in Hell

(Bukhari and Muslim).

The food of those in Hell. Abu Said Khudri has quoted the Holy Prophet as saying that the Quran says pus or purulent discharge that would flow from the wounds of those condemned to Hell shall be their food in intense hunger. Its smell would be so noxious that if a bucketful of it were thrown on the world, the entire world would stink with its odour and rottenness" (Tirmizi).

And Paradise. Abu Huraira narrates that the Holy Prophet said God has declared that for His virtuous servants He has created such things as no eye has ever seen, and no ear has ever heard, and the thought or apprehension of which has never crossed the human mind (Bukhari and Muslim).

Study these details furnished by the Quran and the Hadith and consider what great trials we are going to face in the next world. If we succeed, no one would be more fortunate, and if we fail, in spite of our progress and prosperity, no one would be more unfortunate and miserable than we. How are people who spend so much on petty litigation not prepared to spare money, time and labour for the greatest of trials in the court of God in the hereafter? On this trial will depend their eternal pleasure and honour, disgrace and distress. But they have no time for it. "O ye who have eyes, be warned, and take a lesson from this."

OUR RIGHTEOUS PREDECESSORS AND THE FEAR OF THE DAY OF JUDGMENT

WHENEVER the greatest of men, the Holy Prophet of Islam, in the course of prayer recited a verse from the Holy Quran bearing on the Day of Judgment, a convulsion of weeping and sobbing would seize him. Such lamentations adversely affected his health. The Companions said: "Prophet of God, you have aged." The Holy Prophet would then refer to the Chapters of the Holy Quran which highlighted the punishment on the Day of Judgment and say:

"Sura Hud, Sura Waqia, Sura Mursalat, Sura Amm Yatasaalun, and Sura Takwir have made me old" (Tirmizi).

Next to the Holy Prophet, his Companions are the great leaders of the Muslims. Who does not know of their worth in the eyes of God and His Prophet? Some during their lifetime were given the happy news of Paradise by the Holy Prophet, but in spite of this they remained restless and concerned in contemplating the terrible punishment on the Day of Judgment. Abu Bakr Siddiq was so

overwhelmed with fear that when he saw a sparrow perching on a tree he said to it:

“O sparrow, how fortunate you are! I wish I had been like you. You sit on a tree, eat its fruit and then fly away. You are not held to any account. Oh, I wish I were a tree by the wayside. A camel would pass by, catch hold of me, feed on me, chew me, and in this way humiliate me and then throw me out as excreta. I would wish for all that, but I wish I had not been a man” (*Kanz-ul-Ammal*).

According to *Sahih Bukhari*, the powerful and mighty Umar Faruq, on hearing whose name even Caesar and Chroesis shuddered, said at the point of death:

“By God, if I had gold equal to the weight of the earth, I would give all of it away in exchange for redemption from punishment on the Day of Judgment.”

Another time Caliph Umar was carrying some food for a poor woman among his subjects. His servant said: “O leader of the Muslims, why are you carrying this load when I am here to do so?” Umar replied, “You may carry my load today, but who will carry it for me on the Day of Judgment?”

Zarrar Asadi relates that he had accompanied Ali in various battles. He noticed that towards dawn when the last of the stars was about to disappear,

Ali would wake up and catching his beard with his hand show such restlessness as if a snake had bitten him and would exclaim :

“O world! do not deceive me; deceive others. Why are you after me? I have divorced you thrice and I would not cancel the divorce. O world! your life is very short, and to run after you is futile. Ah me! I have a long way to go and the provisions for my journey are very meagre.”

In the generation of Muslims succeeding the Companions the place of Imam Abu Hanifa needs no recapitulation. To this day, millions of Muslims follow his exposition of the Islamic Law. About him Yazid bin Kumait relates: Once Yazid was with the Imam at the night prayers and the Imam recited Sura Iza zulzalat. People went away after saying their prayers but the great Imam sat on. Yazid saw that the Imam was sobbing and, fearing he might be interrupting, Yazid also withdrew. When he came back to the mosque early next morning, he saw the Imam still where he was, looking distressed. Beard in hand, he was saying midst grief and tear :

“O Mighty Being, Who takes into account the smallest good and bad, please save Thy servant Numan (Abu Hanifa) from the fire of Hell.”
Yazid bin Khaushab has said that he had not seen anyone more afraid of the Day of Resurrection

than Hasan Basri and Umar bin Abdul Aziz. These men were so afraid that it appeared as if Hell itself had been created for them (*Sirat Umar bin Abdul Aziz*).

It is seen how great personages who illumined the dark world were themselves worried and sensitive of being called to account on the Day of Judgment. This fear was, in fact, the reason for their greatness. In whatever way they lived and wherever they lived, they felt they would be called to account for every word and deed.

Thus, their attitude towards God and men was unique. When in power, they worked day and night at their duties; when God's devotees, they set up the finest examples of sympathy for His creatures. The peace, contentment, happiness and satisfaction that reigned during their time is not available, to a tenth degree, in this so-called age of progress.

You may well have thought why contentment has vanished from the minds of men; why the world yearns for peace and tranquillity; why, in spite of the many inventions and development of knowledge and art, man has become a "lamb in wolf's clothing." This is so because men have forgotten about the Day of Judgment which holds no terror for them.

The universal destruction and devastation that followed in the wake of the First World War was an eye-opener. In 1920 the League of Nations was

established and made responsible for the preservation of peace in the world. Its annual budget exceeded a million pounds but it proved to be an exercise in futility. Later, member nations of this organisation fought among themselves a war a hundred times more terrible than the first one. So the League of Nations was dissolved. After the Second World War, fifty-nine nations pledged to establish a new organisation by the name of "United Nations". Magnificent offices have been set up for it, but even this organisation, it is being realised, has failed to remedy the world's maladies. Today, the world echoes to the drumbeat of a possible third world war.

If only one could convince mankind that redress of its wrongs does not lie with the League of Nations or the United Nations! The sole remedy, as the Quran teaches, and on the basis of the unity of mankind, is a just and fair organisation, and through implicit faith in and fear of the Day of Judgment. Such a consummation would give the world the peace and happiness it desires.

LINK BETWEEN THE WORLD AND THE HEREAFTER

HOW should one view the mutual relationship of the world with the hereafter? As with other problems of human life, people in this important matter also are susceptible to over-and under-estimation.

There are those who, holding the world to be polluted and unholy, regard withdrawal from it as necessary. For them ultimate salvation lies in forswearing mundane pleasures and choosing asceticism. There are others who, by holding that Islam and worldliness are synonymous, stand on the threshold of world-worship.

Viewed justly, both these beliefs of the world and the hereafter do not conform to Islamic thought.

If turning one's face from the world were necessary, and if all human preoccupations were evil, the Holy Prophet would never have declared the earning of one's bread as obligatory. According to a famous hadith, he was pleased to say: "After the fulfilment of religious obligations according to Islam, the striving for lawful livelihood is an obligation." The striving for lawful livelihood has been

declared an imperative, and not discretionary like *Sunnat* or *Wajib*. On another occasion the Holy Prophet said: "Of the good deeds, the foremost virtue is the earning of lawful livelihood." The striving for lawful livelihood, therefore, has been made more important than all other actions. Who could be more worldly than a trader who has to deal with money night and day. But here is what the greatest of virtuous men had to say about them:

"On the Day of Resurrection a truthful and honest trader will be amongst the Prophets, the Righteous, and the Martyrs."

For respectable people devoted to religion higher stations in the love of God cannot be attained without forgoing mundane pleasures. But we notice that some famous religious devotees were well-dressed people, partial to tasty food. Their tastes were obviously a private matter. About Imam Nasai whose religious devotions and culinary partialities were common talk, Zahabi writes in his biography:

"For meals he preferred chickens of large size, specially purchased for him, and which after being castrated were fattened before being slaughtered."

Khwaja Hasan Basri, whose fear of God and saintliness were known throughout the Islamic world, was so fond of tasty foods that it is said of him in *Tabaqat Ibn Saad*:

“In the soup served to no other person have I seen such flavour and fragrance as in the one served to Hasan Basri.”

About Imam Malik it is related :

“He always wore costly clothes and was always heavily perfumed. He never partook of food without meat being served. He was so firm in his tastes that if on a day there was no money to purchase meat, he would not hesitate to sell something to buy it” (*al-Dibaj-ul-Mazhab*) :

These illustrations show that belief in the Day of Judgment does not imply worldly renunciation. But care and moderation are essential. For example, it is provided in the Quran :

“O Prophet, tell people that the riches of the world are limited and the life hereafter is better for the righteous and the pious” (Sura al-Nisa).

It is further provided :

“Life in the world is of limited duration ; the world hereafter is indeed the real place to live (Sura al-Mumin).

At another place it is said :

“And the reality about life in the world is nothing but this that it is mere fun and play, and the life hereafter is indeed better for those who live a life of righteousness and piety” (Sura al-Inam).

To the same effect is a hadith related by Abu Huraira which says that the Holy Prophet said : A

worldly man is deprived of the mercy of God, and a man of wealth is removed from His kindness.

According to another hadith, it is stated by Kaab bin Iyaz that he heard the Holy Prophet say that for every people there is a particular test and for his people the particular test was wealth (Tirmizi).

According to Bukhari and Muslim, Amr bin Auf has related that the Holy Prophet said :

“I am not afraid of poverty and indigence for my people. I am afraid lest the world becomes more attractive to you as it became for the people preceding you. Then you will become more attached to the world, as the other people were and who had gone mad over it. That will lead to your destruction the same way as the people preceding you were destroyed.”

These extracts underscore the truth that, while Islam assigned a place of honour to striving for earning lawful livelihood, it holds materialism and greed as abhorrent and blameworthy. It does not expect believers to become slaves of the Mammon or materialism to dominate them to the extent of forgetting the hereafter.

Apparently, these two views are mutually contradictory. But if one were to look deeper it would be clear that Islam does not stand in the way of worldliness. It inculcates the need for attending to worldly affairs in a judicious way. It does not permit

the accumulation of wealth through fair means or foul. It permits attention to affairs within the limits prescribed ; such worldliness is a part of religion. But if these limits are exceeded and the Islamic injunctions disregarded, the defaulter obviously chooses to stand in line with Satan's fraternity.

Moderation implies enjoyment of life proceeding along the right way. Love for the good things of life must not be carried to the point of obliterating from one's mind all thought of the life hereafter Shaikh Abdul Qadir Gilani has meaningfully said :

“The world is something to be kept in hand. It may be kept in the pocket, but it is not something to be kept in mind.”

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